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The University of Alberta

EMPLOYMENT POTENTIAL

of

PERSONS WITH MILD MENTAL HANDICAPS

by

BEV COOPER

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR

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IN

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.....James M. Small.....

(Supervisor)

.....

.....

Date: October 12, 1989

DEDICATION

To all employers who have demonstrated
an interest in persons with mental handicaps

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore factors which may be associated with the employment of persons with mild mental handicaps (MMH). A survey was mailed to 160 employers in Alberta who had provided work experience to persons with MMH. It was hoped that the results would be of benefit to educators and counsellors in the planning of vocational programs and in the selection of worksites for persons with MMH.

Ninety-one employers responded. Parametric and non-parametric statistics were computed and analyzed and employers' comments and suggestions were summarized.

Although the worksites which the respondents represented offer a wide variety of services, the majority are independent, private retail businesses.

Results indicate that employers generally perceive that persons with MMH are capable of competitive employment. Further, their attitudes toward persons with MMH are positive and present opportunities for the employment of persons with MMH. While employers also perceive that persons

with MMH have some skill deficiencies, these perceptions reflect the intellectual limitations of persons with MMH and are not indicative of prejudices.

Employers believe that all applicant attributes listed in this study influence the hiring decision. Honesty, regard for safety, quality of work, eagerness to work, ability to follow instructions and to get along with others, sense of responsibility, and respect for authority are rated highest. As well, the availability of low skill jobs and previous experience with persons with MMH are generally perceived as influencing the hiring decision.

Applicant attributes appear to be the main determinants for the decision to hire persons with MMH. Worksite factors, particularly labour costs, agency policies, and the opinions of others appear to be the main determinants for the decision not to hire persons with MMH.

The best prospects for employment, for persons with MMH, are at worksites which have routine, repetitive jobs with limited customer contact, and where a unilateral hiring decision can be made.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In Canada, mental retardation affects three percent of the population (Hardin, Ryan & Stanley, 1981, p. 29). Of these, one-half to two-thirds are mildly mentally handicapped (Government of Alberta, 1984).

According to Ward (1980), a challenge for society in the 1980s is to provide opportunities for persons with handicaps to enjoy productive and fulfilling lifestyles. Likewise, Wolfensberger (1972) advocated the "normalization" of persons with mental handicaps by "establishing and/or maintaining personal behaviors which are as culturally normative as possible" (p. 28). For the majority of the disabled, however, unemployment is one of the significant barriers to normalcy. In 1983-84, compared to 75% of the non-disabled adults, less than one-half of all disabled adults were in the labour force (Taylor, 1989, p. 4).

The belief that everyone has the right to work is reflected in Alberta by the many institutions and agencies which provide vocational support to persons with mental handicaps. These services include sheltered workshops and industries, on-site training, placement and follow-up services and educational programs.

Employment programs targeted to persons with mild mental handicaps (MMH) generally include a work experience component to provide opportunities for the development of job skills at actual worksites. One issue of concern is that many persons with MMH start work experience training, but do not complete it. Furthermore, follow-up studies have shown that job turnover among persons with MMH is high (Fahy & McLean, 1987). There is clearly a need to investigate the expectations of employers who may be inclined to hire persons with MMH.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to explore, from the perspective of employers, factors which may be associated with the employment of persons with MMH.

Sub-Problems

The following specific questions served as guides for the study:

1) What are the characteristics of responding employers?

2) What applicant attributes are perceived by employers to influence the hiring decision (to hire or not to hire a person with MMH)?

3) What worksite factors are perceived by employers to influence the hiring decision?

4) What are employers' perceptions of the work-related attributes of persons with MMH?

5) What are employers' perceptions of the impact on the worksite of hiring persons with MMH?

6) What are employers' perceptions concerning the potential employability of persons with MMH?

7) What relationships exist between employers' perceptions and employers' characteristics?

8) What factors contribute to the competitive employment of persons with MMH?

Significance of the Study

Salzberg, Agran and Lignugaris/Kraft (1986) claimed that knowledge of "skills associated with job success can be important in improving employment preparation curricula, especially survey and interview studies that have provided employer opinions" (p. 299). This study explores employment related skills that may be problematic for persons with MMH.

The results could be of interest to persons directly involved in the vocational education, training, and placement of persons with MMH, to related government agencies, to employment placement officers and

counsellors, and to interested adult educators.

This study contributes to the literature on employment of persons with mental handicaps. Of the 26 documents listed with the Education Resources Information Centre (ERIC) which are related to employment and mental retardation, three focus on persons with MMH.

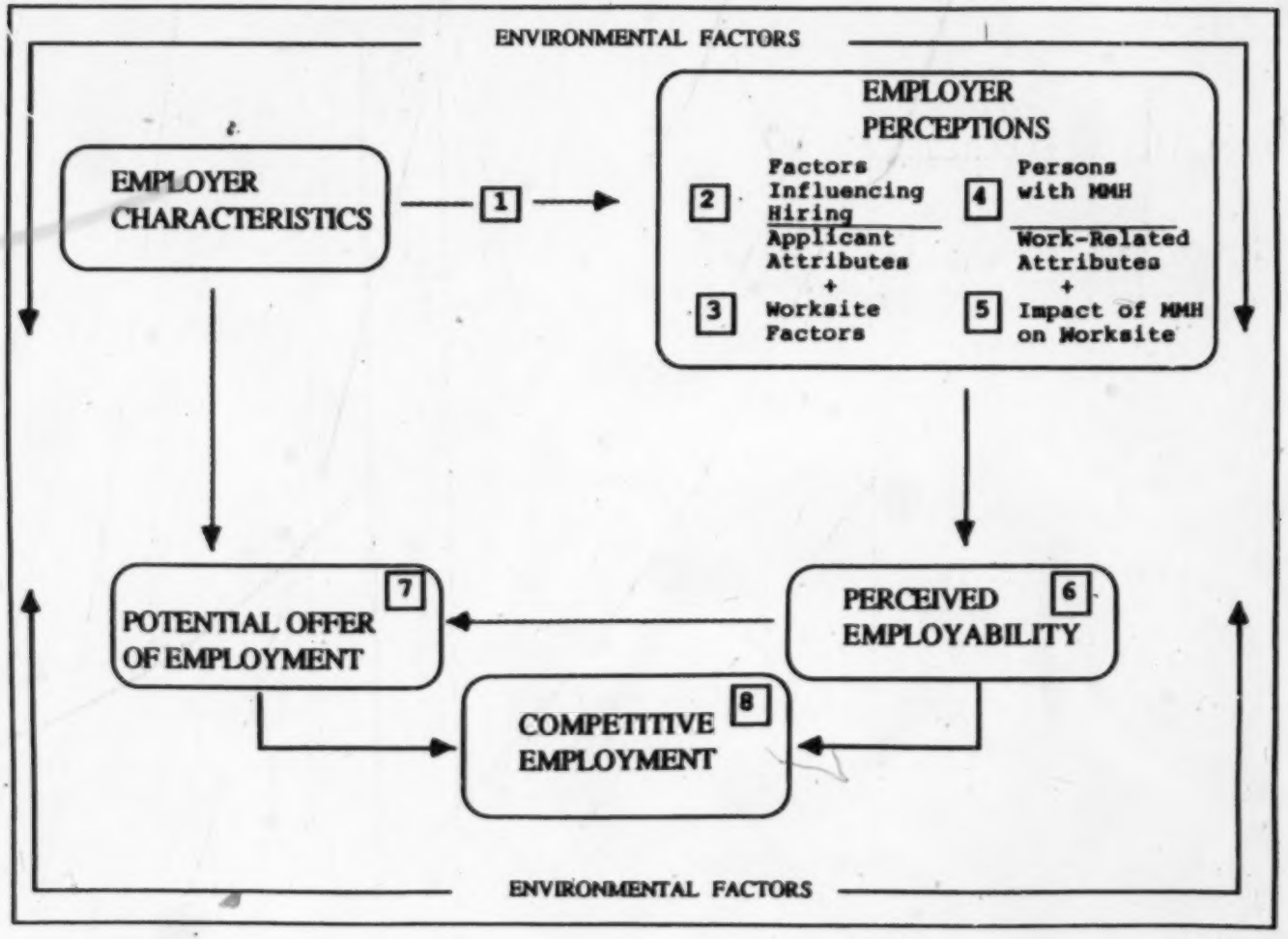
Most of the current literature is American, and this study is valuable as it provides a Canadian perspective.

Further, previous studies relating to the employment of persons with handicaps have generally explored the views of agencies or employers, on either their perception of persons with handicaps or their perceptions of desirable generic skills. The uniqueness of this study, and its research significance, is that it determines which skills employers consider important to the hiring decision and then compares the results to their perceptions of persons with MMH.

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework for the focus of this study is presented in Figure 1. It displays a theoretical interaction of factors which may have an impact on the ability of persons with mental handicaps to secure and maintain competitive employment. Environmental factors such as social, legal, political and economic forces are

FIGURE 1. Conceptual framework.



always prevalent and must be acknowledged. As well, the characteristics of employers and their perceptions of the factors which influence the hiring decision, the attributes of persons with MMH and the impact of persons with MMH on the worksite all relate to the opportunities and barriers to the potential employment of persons with MMH.

The relationships suggested by the theoretical model give rise to the sub-problems of this study. Number "1", indicates that a link may exist between employer characteristics and their perceptions. This suggests that the demographics of a worksite and the past experience that employers have with persons with MMH may be associated with their perceptions of the employability of persons with MMH.

Numbers "2" to "5" denote the employers' perceptions which are central to the perceived employability of persons with MMH (6). The extent to which employers perceive that applicant attributes (2) and worksite factors (3) influence the hiring decision, as well as their perceptions of the work-related attributes of persons with MMH (4), and the impact of persons with MMH on the worksite (5), combine and interact to shape their perceptions of the employability of persons with MMH. Number "7" indicates that the relationships which exist

between employers' perceptions and characteristics may affect the offer of employment to persons with MMH. The competitive employment of a person with MMH occurs when an employer perceives not only that the individual is competitively employable, but also that there is an opportunity for employment at the worksite (8).

Research Assumptions

Since the population chosen for this study consists of supervisors or administrators who have volunteered to participate in a work experience program for persons with MMH, it was assumed that the respondents have an interest in the potential employability of persons with MMH. For the same reason, it was assumed that the respondents are typical of employers who are at worksites where there are jobs suitable for persons with MMH. Conversely, it cannot be assumed that the respondents are typical of all employers, nor that their views reflect the views of other supervisors and administrators at their worksite.

Delimitations

This study was delimited to employers in an urban centre in Alberta, who had participated in the work experience component of a vocational centre's transitional vocational program between January, 1983 and

June, 1988.

Limitations

This study is limited by the following:

1) As the design of this research is a descriptive survey, the results can only be interpreted as expressed views of the respondents. Generalizations can not be made to other employers, nor can causal analysis be made between the variables.

2) The views expressed by the respondents may not represent their true feelings, nor those of their superiors or subordinates.

Operational Definitions

The following terms and variables have specific meaning in this study:

Competitive Employment

Competitive employment, or open employment, is employment which provides at least the provincial minimum wage, without subsidy, to the employee.

Cooperating Employer

The term "cooperating employer" is used to represent a supervisor or administrator at an institution, agency, organization or business, who has expressed a willingness to participate in a work experience program.

Employability

Employability is the extent to which an individual has the skills and abilities required for competitive employment.

Transitional Vocational Program

Transitional Vocational Program refers to an educational program which helps adults with MMH to develop competitive employment skills. "TVP" refers to the transitional vocational program which was selected for this study.

Mild Mental Handicaps

In the literature persons with mental handicaps have been labelled variously as mentally retarded, developmentally disabled and intellectually impaired or disabled. Also, they have been categorized according to a standardized intelligence measure such as the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale or Weschler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS-R). In this study, the intellectual range for persons with MMH is between 60 and 80 when measured on the WAIS-R. (Note, this range is in accordance with the guidelines of the Vocational Rehabilitation for Disabled Persons (VRDP), which provides funding to transitional vocational programs for persons with MMH in Alberta.)

As the term "mildly mentally handicapped", is used by instructors in the transitional vocational program (TVP) in their contacts with employers, it was chosen for this study to describe the TVP student population which the employers have accepted for work experience.

Employer Characteristics

Employer characteristics, listed in Section I of the questionnaire, (see page 111), refer to the demographics of the worksite and employers' previous experiences in training and hiring of persons with MMH.

Work-Related Attributes

Work-related attributes, listed in Section II of the questionnaire, (see page 113), refer to the attributes of persons with MMH which are associated with skills related to the job.

Applicant Attributes

Applicant attributes, listed in Section III, Part A of the questionnaire, (see page 116), refer to the personal variables which may influence the hiring decision.

Worksite Factors

Worksite factors, listed in Section III, Part B of the questionnaire, (see page 118), refer to the variables, specific to the worksite and external to persons with MMH, which may influence the hiring

decision.

Methodology

Selection of the Population

The population for this study included all cooperating employers, of a transitional vocational program at a vocational centre in Alberta, who, between January 1983 and June 1988, had accepted one or more students from the program. As a consequence of staff changes or business closures, from a potential population of 172, a subset of 160 employers was available. This subset was defined as the target population for the study.

Instrumentation

Kazdin and Matson (1981) proposed that social validation, which is a method used to examine the social acceptability of intervention programs, is a valuable methodological tool for identifying behaviours that need to be focused upon in treatment of persons with mental handicaps (p. 40). They stated that "successful community placement requires identifying areas of training and assessing the magnitude of changes required for normalized functioning" (p. 41). Subjective evaluation is a method used for social validation of behaviours. Subjective evaluation, as described by

Kazdin and Matson (1981), "consists of soliciting the opinions of persons who are in a special position by virtue of their expertise or relationship to the client to evaluate the specific behaviors that are important or the amount of change achieved through rehabilitation or training" (p. 41).

Ecological analysis, a new approach to vocational assessment, was defined by Wehman, Renzaglia, and Bates (1985) as a systematic method for identifying skills that have a high priority for a person to learn.

Based on the principles of subjective evaluation, a questionnaire was constructed to elicit the views of the TVP employers, and from the resulting data, to ecologically analyze the employability of persons with MMH. This method provides for the social validation of recommendations arising from the analysis.

The draft questionnaire was pilot tested using a sample of four employers. Five professionals, with background and knowledge of employment of persons with MMH, and two professional researchers, were asked to provide feedback on the proposed questionnaire. Following revisions resulting from the pilot study, the questionnaire was assembled in final form.

Data Collection

Responses to each variable on the questionnaire were entered into a microcomputer using Multiplan, a software program. Sections I, II and III of the questionnaire produced quantitative data. Eighty-nine variables were identified from the survey questions. Responses to the subjective questions were compiled, categorized and summarized.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS/PC+. Parametric and non-parametric statistics were used to examine the variables identified in the study. Employers' comments were used as a supplement to the discussion of the results of the scored variables.

Organization of the Thesis

The introduction of the nature and purpose of the thesis in Chapter I is followed by a review of the related literature in Chapter II. This chapter is organized thematically to address the different aspects of the research problem. It includes a discussion of persons with MMH, their employability and the factors which may affect the hiring decision.

Chapter III describes the procedures used for the study. These include the selection of the problem and

data sources, the development of the instrument used to obtain data, and the procedures involved in obtaining the data.

Chapter IV presents and discusses the data results and Chapter V includes a summary, conclusions, and recommendations.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section reviews the literature relevant to an understanding of persons with MMH, their employability and the factors which may influence the hiring decision.

A computer search of ERIC was completed in December, 1988 and of the 26 documents related to employment and mental retardation, three focused on persons with MMH. Much of the literature related to this topic is not listed in ERIC, and was found from references in the ERIC documents which were obtained and from a reference list produced by the Government of Alberta, Department of Advanced Education and Manpower, Program Coordination Branch (1986).

Persons with Mental Handicaps

Mentally Handicapped

The disabled population includes persons who have mental and/or physical disabilities. Within the mentally disabled sector are the mentally ill, learning disabled and mentally retarded.

The World Health Organization (WHO) in 1980 distinguished between impairment, disability and handicap. Impairment was defined a "any loss or

abnormality of psychological, physiological or anatomical structure or function"; disability as "any restriction or lack [resulting from an impairment] of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being"; and handicap as a "disadvantage for a given individual, resulting from an impairment or a disability that limits or prevents the fulfilment of a role that is normal [depending on age, sex, social and cultural factors] for that individual" (pp. 28-33).

The Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI), in a July, 1983 report, presented a major shift in the use of the word handicap. The report conceptualized handicap as a "dynamic interaction between the individual with a disability and changing situations with which he is faced" (p. 3).

The American Association on Mental Deficiency (AAMD) defines mental retardation as "significantly subaverage general intellectual functioning existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior, and manifested during the developmental period" (Grossman, 1983, p. 1). Grossman (1983) refers to general intellectual functioning as "the results obtained by assessment with one or more of the individually administered general intelligence tests developed for the purpose of assessing

intellectual functioning"; and significantly subaverage as "IQ 70 or below on standardized measures of intelligence" and that "this upper limit is intended as a guideline" (Grossman, 1983, p. 11). Based on a normal curve, an IQ that is 70 or below is two or more standard deviations below the mean for the test. Deficits in adaptive behaviour refers to the "significant limitations in an individual's effectiveness in meeting the standards of maturation, learning, personal independence and/or social responsibility that are expected for his or her age level and cultural group as determined by clinical assessment and, usually, standardized scales"; and developmental period as "the period of time between conception and the 18th birthday" (Grossman, 1983, p. 11).

The AAMD's conceptualization of mental retardation as a psychological phenomenon existing with the individual is medically consistent with the World Health Organization's Internal Classification of Diseases-9 (ICD-9) and the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual-III (DSM-III). However, the AAMD definition has greater specificity, particularly with reference to the etiology than the ICD-9 and DSM-III (Grossman, 1983, p. 7).

Gold (1980) offered a counter definition which conceptualizes mental retardation as a sociological phenomenon existing within society. He stated:

> Mental retardation refers to a level of functioning which requires from society significantly above average training procedures and superior assets in adaptive behavior on the part of society, manifested throughout the life of both society and the individual.
>
> The mentally retarded person is characterized by the level of power needed in the training process required for her to learn, and not by limitations in what she can learn.
>
> The height of a retarded person's level of functioning is determined by the availability of training technology and the amount of resources society is willing to allocate and not by significant limitations in biological potential. (p. 148)

This conceptualization perceives the handicap attributed to mental retardation as contingent upon the opportunities and barriers to training and employment.

Mildly Mentally Handicapped

Within the mentally retarded population, profoundly retarded persons have the greatest degree of intellectual impairment and mildly retarded persons, the least amount of intellectual impairment.

The literature reveals a variety of terms for persons with mild mental retardation and their differences can be attributed to the context in which the terms are used. Slower learners, borderline mentally retarded, educable

mentally handicapped, educable mentally retarded, developmentally retarded, mildly developmentally disabled, mildly mentally retarded and mildly mentally handicapped have all been used to refer to the same level of retardation.

However, confusion in the literature arises, because not all sources use the same intellectual tests or adaptive scores and their upper range differs. Therefore, persons referred to as MMH might, by another classification system, be regarded as moderately handicapped.

Grossman (1983) defines mild mental retardation as a term used "to describe the degree of retardation present when intelligence test scores are 50 or 55 to approximately 70; many mildly retarded [educable] individuals who function at this level can usually master basic academic skills whereas adults at this level may maintain themselves independently or semi-independently in the community" (p. 184). Intelligence testing scores for persons with mild mental retardation range from more than two and up to three standard deviations below the norm.

Heber, in 1961, proposed a system for classification which includes a category of borderline mentally retarded for persons with an IQ from approximately 70-85

(McMillan, 1988, p. 273). McMillan (1988) clarifies that frequently the term "mildly retarded" has been used to refer to both mild and borderline categories (p. 273). He also explains that the current AAMD classification of mild mental retardation is not consistent with the concept of this population in educational spheres.

Reschly (1988) proposed a more functionally based assessment for use in education, whereby the IQ test is removed and replaced with measures of the behaviour it is supposed to predict. According to Reschly (1988) persons with MMH would have (1) severe chronic achievement problems indicated by performance markedly below classroom averages, national norms, and with minority students, markedly below performance obtained by other students of the same sociocultural group; (2) significantly deficient achievement across most if not all areas; and (3) severe chronic achievement problems that persist despite a variety of educational interventions including placement in remedial programming, grade repetition, and other interventions designed to overcome achievement difficulties (p. 296).

The guidelines offered by Alberta Education describe a mild (educable) mentally handicapped student as having an IQ in the range of 50 to 75 $\pm$ 5, as measured on an individual intelligence test and demonstrating academic

or social disabilities within the regular classroom (Millar, 1983, p. 4).

Students in the TVP at Alberta Vocational Centre, Edmonton generally have an IQ score of between 60 and 80 as measured on the WAIS-R. The average WAIS-R score of 62 TVP graduates who responded to a survey was 70.9 (Fahy & McLean, 1987, p. 8). This intellectual range more closely resembles Heber's classification and the definition given by Alberta Education than it does the AAMD's classification.

As the definition of persons with MMH is inconsistent within the literature, the reader is cautioned that the terms used to describe the mentally handicapped populations, may refer to different intellectual levels of functioning. In the literature review which follows, the label used to describe persons with mental handicaps is stated according to the terminology used in the studies reviewed.

Employability of Persons with Mental Handicaps

Research indicates that persons with mental handicaps have potential for competitive employment, and, in some work-related skills, have performed better than other employees. The literature also explores reasons for their employment success and failure.

Competitive Employment

Kraus and MacEachron (1982) conducted a follow-up study of 26 mentally retarded persons, with an average IQ of 62, and found that they can be reliable and productive workers within the competitive labour force.

From a review of related literature, Moon, Orelove and Beale (1985) concluded that many persons with moderate and severe mental retardation are capable of working in competitive jobs, but only with support services, such as placement assistance, can it become a reality.

For example, in a follow-up study of 167 mentally retarded persons with a mean IQ of 50, Wehman, Hill, Hill, Brooke, Pendelton and Britt (1985) concluded that, with supported employment services for training, placement and follow-up, mentally retarded persons were capable of maintaining competitive employment.

A study conducted in Edmonton, Alberta expressed similar findings. Juergens (1979) found that job placements of persons with MMH which were made by agencies, were more likely to be successful.

The literature indicates that persons with mental handicaps are employed in a wide variety of jobs. For example, Parent and Everson (1986) cited the findings of the National Association for Retarded Citizens (NARC)

(1977) that "Mentally retarded workers are no longer found only in janitorial and dishwashing jobs, but are increasingly being employed in more publicly observable jobs such as jet engine assemblers, offset press operators, drafters, coding clerks, meteorological technicians, library assistants, and X-ray film processors" (p. 16).

Comparison of Handicapped and Non-Handicapped Employees

Kelly and Simon (1969) conducted a survey, which asked employers how their mentally retarded employees compared with other employees in the areas of task completion, speed in performing tasks, and resistance to fatigue. They found that the majority of mentally handicapped employees were rated at least average, or better than average, compared to other employees, and that they performed routine, repetitive tasks better.

Martin, Rusch, Tines, Brulle, and White (1985) conducted a survey of 103 food service labourers (80 non-handicapped and 23 mentally retarded). They found that "the attendance records of competitively employed workers who are mentally retarded are at least as good as their nonhandicapped peers" (p. 145).

From the results of a mail and telephone survey, sent to 483 supervisors, from companies which had hired at least one worker with mental retardation, Shafer, Hill,

Seyfarth and Wehman (1987) concluded that employers perceived workers with mental retardation as dependable, trustworthy and loyal, but slower to learn, slower to perform, and in need of extra supervision.

Factors Related to Employment Success and Failure

Juergens (1979) concluded significant personal factors related to employment success of persons with MMH were postsecondary training, a driver's licence, and involvement in leisure activities.

Schalock and Harper (1978) examined the reasons for the termination of 131 mentally retarded adults from competitive employment. They reported that poor productivity, inappropriate social interactions and lack of initiative were cited most frequently by employers.

Based on interviews, with former employers of 30 persons with mild and moderate handicaps, whose IQ scores averaged 61.8 on the full-scale WAIS, Greenspan and Shoultz (1981) concluded that it is an "inability to interact effectively with other people, rather than an inability to operate machines or perform job tasks, that often causes many mentally retarded adults to get fired from competitive employment" (p. 23).

Schloss, Schloss and Miller (1983) reported that it is widely recognized that "handicapped individuals are more likely to fail in competitive work not because of

vocational performance problems, but because of interpersonal skill deficits" (p. 4).

From a mail survey sent to 46 vocational and training programs for mentally handicapped adults in Alberta, Mueller and Wilgosh (1985) concluded that failure in employment is related to poor interpersonal skills, poor attendance and punctuality, and lack of self-confidence.

Factors Which May Influence the Hiring Decision

The literature discusses applicant attributes, employer attitudes, worksite factors and external factors as variables which may influence the hiring decision.

Applicant Attributes

Applicant attributes, which include work-related skills and abilities, are presented, in the literature, from the perspective of students, instructors, employers and agency personnel.

In a study in which vocational high school students, instructors and employers expressed their views, pride in one's work and efficiency were seen as the two most important personal qualifications related to successful competitive employment (Uttaro, 1972).

Stewart (1977) interviewed 200 employers from 10 occupational settings, and concluded that employers want employees who have good work habits and are job ready.

Employers indicated that "they are more interested in finding positive work attitudes and motivation to work among potential employees and they would rate these criteria higher than the need to possess technical skills" (p. 31).

Members of Fortune 500 indicated that applicant factors which greatly influence their decision to hire individuals with a disability are job performance, job productivity, and absenteeism (Mithaug, 1980).

Mueller and Wilgosh (1985) examined employers' expectations, from an agency viewpoint, in order to determine the most important social/vocational skills and behaviours for entry into competitive employment in Alberta. They concluded that employers value the ability to follow instructions, attendance and punctuality, grooming and hygiene, and social skills.

Mueller, Wilgosh and Dennis (1987) sent a follow-up mail survey to 56 Alberta government and non-profit private agencies which offer vocational skills training to adults with mental disabilities. They found that, of the 135 work-related skills, behaviours and attitudes presented, the respondents expressed the view that dependability and interpersonal skills were most important to survival in competitive employment, followed closely by work safety, attendance/punctuality, accepting

criticism and/or instructions, and the nature and amount of supervision.

In a study conducted by Salzberg, Agran, and Lignugaris/Kraft (1986), supervisors, from five entry-level occupations, were asked to judge the importance and frequency of 23 work-related behaviours. The researchers concluded that employees who produce faster are likely to be more highly valued than slower producing employees.

The Vocational Assessment and Curriculum Guide (VACG) assesses the functional living skills for moderately and severely handicapped individuals. From the viewpoint of employers, it identifies 66 items in the following vocational and social skills domains as having a high priority, for entry into service and light industrial jobs: attendance, endurance, independence, production, learning, behaviour, communication skills, social skills and self-help skills (Menchetti & Rusch, 1988, pp. 285-287).

Employer Attitudes

Wilgosh and Skaret (1987) reviewed the literature relative to employer attitudes toward hiring individuals with disabilities. They concluded that employer attitudes, which differ toward different disabilities, continue to inhibit the ability of the disabled to obtain employment and to make advancements within the workplace.

Byrd, Byrd and Emener (1977) studied the differences in the perceptions of employers, counsellors and students of the employability of persons with severe disabilities. From 20 disabilities which were presented, respondents were asked to indicate how they would feel about hiring individuals with these disabilities. Based on the likelihood of being hired, persons with mental retardation were ranked by employers as seventh, by rehabilitation counsellors, eighth and by university students majoring in rehabilitation, third.

Fuqua, Rathbun and Gade (1984) found that employers' attitudes towards disabled workers varied significantly across eight selected disabilities. The blind and mentally retarded were rated least favourably as prospective employees, while more favourable responses were shown toward hiring epileptics and amputees.

Research continues to support the assumptions that a discrepancy exists between employer expressed willingness to hire disabled workers and actual practices (Wilgosh & Skaret, 1987). For example, Gibson and Groenweg (1986), from a survey of 3,263 employers in Alberta, found that while almost two-thirds of the employers expressed acceptance of persons with mental handicaps as potential work force members, the principle of acceptance often did not translate to willingness to receive inquiries or job

applications from such persons. While 65% of the employers gave avoidance replies as reasons for not hiring persons with mental handicaps, the next highest reason offered, (17% of employers responding), was overall competency concerns (p. 14).

Gibson and Groeneweg (1986) concluded that employers believed that the developmentally handicapped worker, would "either require close, continuing and costly supervision; be overly accident prone; or have a marginal health status which would lead to chronic absenteeism and low job performance" (p. 14).

Hill and Wehman (1980) conducted a study to determine supervisors' and co-workers' perceptions of the work-related attributes of severely and moderately handicapped persons, who were competitively employed, largely in food service positions. The respondents, 16 supervisors and 27 co-workers, believed that employees with mental handicaps were dependable and reliable, but that they had difficulties in changing routines and in working faster.

Fuqua, Rathbun and Gade (1984) found that employers highly ranked the following attributes as problem areas for persons with mental retardation: the ability to handle new situations, the amount of supervision needed, productivity and emotional stability.

Studies have indicated that myths associated with the ability of persons with a mental handicap to perform on the job, are barriers to their employment (Ellner & Bender, 1980; Fuqua, Rathbun, & Gade, 1984; Pati, Adkins, Jr., & Morrison, 1987).

Myths related to training, production, injuries and reliability were examined in a report by the President's Committee on Mental Retardation (1983). The report concluded that misconceptions, about the abilities of mentally retarded persons to meet and maintain employment standards, have been a major obstacle to their employment (p. 6).

External Factors

Factors other than attitudes, may influence the hiring decision. Examples of these are: labour costs, compliance with affirmative action, company policies, the type of business, and past experience with the handicapped.

In a survey of employers who had previous experience with persons with mental handicaps, Kelly and Simon (1969) found that the use of persons with mental handicaps reduced labour costs caused by lateness, absenteeism, and high turnover.

From a mail survey sent to Fortune 500 companies, Mithaug (1980) found that the factors which ranked

highest, as influencing employers' decisions to hire handicapped persons, were: ability to perform job, productivity, compliance with affirmative action, absenteeism, and positive public relations. These findings indicate that worksite factors, as well as employee factors, affect the decision to hire.

While Kochany and Keller (1981) found that the social skills of persons with mental handicaps have prevented them from getting and maintaining competitive employment, they also cited lack of transportation, lack of understanding by parents, and the policies of employers.

Type of business also appears to influence the hiring decision. Stewart (1977) concluded that favourable employment climates for the handicapped are clerical, food services, custodial, service stations, and upholstery. He also found that there seems to be an employer reluctance to employ the handicapped in sales and laundry/drycleaning.

Wehman (1981) cited a study conducted by Harlage (1974), which found that employers in the manufacturing industries were the most receptive to hiring retarded persons, and that those in service industries were the least receptive (p. 120).

Gibson and Groeneweg (1986) concluded that employers in the manufacturing sector, unlike the resource and

services sectors, expressed a major preoccupation with overall employee competence (p. 14).

Several studies have indicated that favourable past experiences with disabled individuals positively influence employer attitudes toward hiring disabled workers (Covey, 1987; Gruenhagen, 1982; Wilgosh & Skaret, 1987).

Shafer, Hill, Seyfarth & Wehman (1987) found that employers who hired mentally handicapped did so because of a commitment that such individuals deserve an opportunity to work.

Summary

The literature conveys a sense that not only can persons with MMH secure and maintain competitive employment, but that persons functioning below this intellectual range are also capable of doing so. Studies have also indicated that on certain tasks, persons with mental handicaps can perform at least as well as other employees.

Studies related to the employment success of persons with MMH, focus on reasons which are external to work-related skills. Employment support, postsecondary training, involvement in leisure activities, and a driver's licence, are associated with successful

employment.

Most studies of employment experiences, of persons with mental handicaps, cite reasons for their failure, rather than their success. They focus on specific skills such as inappropriate social behaviours, inflexibility, poor productivity, extra supervision, and emotional instability.

The literature indicates that employers consider a wide range of applicant attributes, when making a hiring decision. It also suggests that while negative attitudes continue to exist, exposure to persons with mental handicaps appears to bring about a more sympathetic understanding.

External factors, such as affirmative action, public relations, company policies, type of business, previous experience with persons with handicaps, and profit, are cited in the literature as influencing the decision to hire persons with mental handicaps.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This section describes the design of this study, the data sources used to conduct the research and the procedures used.

Design of the Study

A descriptive survey research design was chosen for this study, as it is primarily concerned with the nature and degree of existing conditions, and not with making predictions or drawing causal inferences. Survey research is considered as a method of systematic data collection (Borg & Gall, 1983, p. 405).

A mail-out questionnaire was chosen to collect data. This method seemed preferable to either in-person or telephone interviews for the following reasons: (1) time manageability -- there were 172 potential respondents, and therefore, a mail-out questionnaire would be more time manageable; (2) the questions asked were relatively straightforward and easy to comprehend; and (3) the use of a questionnaire, rather than an interview format, minimized the effects due to interviewer's characteristics. As this researcher, an instructor in the TVP, had previous contact with some of

the potential respondents, it was important to use a method which would minimize researcher effects.

Data Sources

This study focuses on data which were obtained from the cooperating employers of a selected transitional vocational program for persons with MMH, in an urban area in Alberta, who had accepted a student for work experience between January 1983 and June 1988.

Staff changes and business closures precluded the survey from being sent to all employers who had participated in the transitional vocational program. The survey was addressed to the staff person who had initially agreed to participate. For the most part, this person had also supervised a student from the program.

Surveys were mailed to 172 employers, 160 of which were deliverable. Of the 12 surveys which were undeliverable, two were returned as the business was no longer at the location; and, at ten employers, follow-up phone calls revealed that the staff person to whom the questionnaire had been sent was no longer there.

Questionnaire Development

The questionnaire was developed in final form after a literature search for similar studies was conducted to

determine which factors previous researchers had identified as relevant to competitive employment and the employability of persons with MMH. Based on these findings, in particular the studies conducted by Hill and Wehman (1980), Mithaug (1980) and Mueller, Wilgosh and Dennis (1987), and from the work experience evaluation form used in the TVP, the survey questions were formulated.

Five professionals with background and knowledge in employment of persons with MMH and an education researcher, were interviewed to provide feedback on the draft questionnaire. They were asked to comment on content and format. A re-draft was made based on their comments and a pilot study was then conducted.

The revised questionnaire was sent to the professionals cited above, a different researcher, and four supervisors at the cooperating employers of the TVP. One supervisor represented a volunteer agency, another a government agency, and two were from private business. Each was interviewed and asked to provide feedback on the clarity and coherence of the questionnaire, as well as recommendations for improvement. Feedback from the pilot study was used in the final re-draft of the questionnaire (see Appendix 1).

The first section of the questionnaire asked for information related to employer characteristics. This included demographics and information related to their previous experiences with persons with MMH. The purpose of this section was to provide both a profile of the cooperating employers of the TVP, as well as to have data to explore their relationships to employers' perceptions. Questions 10 and 13 were combined to establish two groups of employers --those who offered to hire persons with MMH and those who had not offered to hire persons with MMH.

The second section asked employers to rate the extent to which certain statements about persons with MMH reflected their own views. The third section asked employers to rate the extent to which the listed factors might influence their hiring decision. The fourth, and final section, asked employers for their suggestions on ways to improve the employability of persons with MMH. Space was provided for employers to add additional comments.

Data Collection

A card catalogue, of all employers who expressed interest in accepting a TVP student for work experience was used to determine the total actual population for this study. From the actual population, a list of the

target population was made of all employers who had accepted a TVP student for work experience. Employers who had not been contacted within the last two years were telephoned to determine if the person who had supervised a student from the TVP, and/or had initially agreed to take a TVP student, was still employed there.

A personalized cover letter (see Appendix 1) and a pre-addressed, postage-paid return envelope was included with the questionnaire. The cover letter explained why the employer had been selected to participate in the survey, the purpose of the research, and offered the employers the opportunity to phone the researcher if they had any questions regarding the survey.

In order to determine who had responded, a number which corresponded to an employer was put on the back of each return envelope. An attempt was made to phone all employers who had not responded after three to five weeks. If the researcher was unable to speak directly to the target respondent, a message was left. As a result of the above procedures a response rate of 57% of the target population was obtained.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data, from Sections I, II and III of the questionnaire, were entered onto a microcomputer

using Multiplan, a software program. They were then converted to SPSS/PC+ for analysis. Frequencies and percentages were tabulated for all variables. Analysis of variance and t-tests were conducted to determine relationships between selected variables. Cross-tabulations were conducted for the purpose of categorizing the data.

Data from Section IV, which asks for employers' comments and suggestions, were compiled and then analyzed (see Appendix 2).

Summary

A draft questionnaire was developed based on both the findings from the literature and from the variables listed on the TVP work experience evaluation form. A pilot study was then conducted and feedback from this was integrated into the final form of the questionnaire.

The questionnaire and a pre-addressed, postage-paid return envelope were mailed to 172 supervisors and administrators who had previously accepted one or more TVP students for work experience. One hundred and sixty questionnaires were deliverable and 57% of the potential target population responded.

Parametric and non-parametric statistics were computed and employers' comments were summarized.

CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The findings of the questionnaire survey are presented in this chapter following the sequence of the research questions posed in Chapter I.

Characteristics of Responding Employers

Data descriptive of the characteristics of employers were collected to: (1) determine respondents' representativeness of the target population; (2) provide a profile of employers by agency characteristics; and (3) determine employers' experiences related to persons with MMH.

Survey Population

Table 1 displays data for the population of this study. The total potential population is all employers who have shown an interest in participating in the work experience component of the TVP; and the target population is all employers who have accepted one or more students for work experience. The response rate of the target population, 57%, exceeds the rate of 40% to 50%, which Lehmann and Mehrens (1979) considered a good return rate on mail-out questionnaires.

A comparison of respondents and non-respondents is

Table 1

Population for the Study: TVP Employers

Population	Frequency	Percent
1. Interested in work experience component	380	
2. Involved in work experience component	160	42.1 (of 1)
3. Respondents	91	56.9 (of 2)

displayed in Table 2. Agency characteristics presented were obtained from the TVP's employer files. Percentages reflect the similarities and differences between the respondents and non-respondents.

Public agencies, franchises or national chains, and unions are over represented. For each of these characteristics, the percentage of respondents exceeded the percentage of non-respondents approximately two to one. These differences suggest that some bias could exist in the data which follow.

Table 2

Comparison of Respondents and Non-Respondents

Employer characteristic	Respondents (n=91)		Non-Respondents (n=69)	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Place of work				
Public institution/agency	22	24.2	7	10.2
Private non-profit agency	11	12.1	6	8.6
Private business	58	63.7	56	81.2
Type of Service				
Light industrial	22	27.5	23	33.3
Retail	21	23.1	14	20.3
Service	28	30.7	26	37.7
Other	20	18.7	6	8.7
Type of Control				
Independent	68	75.0	62	89.8
Franchise/national chain	22	25.0	7	10.2
Union Status				
Union	17	18.9	5	7.2
Non-union	73	81.1	64	92.8

Agency Characteristics

Data descriptive of agency characteristics are displayed in Table 3.

Type of agency. Two-thirds of the agencies are private businesses, one-quarter are public agencies, and the remainder are private non-profit agencies.

Type of service. Although there is a wide variety of services (services categorized as Other equals 36% of all services), retail and health care together account for almost 40%. Light Industrial Others include auto service and repair, manufacturing, distribution, laundry, and printing. Service Others include rental and hotel. Others include insurance, research, public relations, and recreation.

Type of control. Three-quarters of agencies are independently operated.

Union status. Eighty-one percent of agencies are non-unionized.

Number of locations. Almost 50% of agencies have only one location in Edmonton, 17% have two locations, and eight agencies have between 13 and 21 locations.

Age of worksite. Ages of the worksites range from less than one year to 115 years, with a median of 14 years. Fifty-percent of the worksites are between 6 and 28 years of age.

Table 3

Agency Characteristics

Characteristic	Frequency	Percent
Type of Agency		
Private business	58	63.7
Public institution/agency	22	24.2
Private non-profit	11	12.1
Type of Service		
Light Industrial		
Wholesale	4	4.4
Recycling	4	4.4
Janitorial	4	4.4
Other	10	14.3
Retail	21	23.1
Service		
Health Care	15	16.5
Restaurant	6	6.6
Daycare	4	4.4
Other	3	3.3
Other	20	18.7

table continues

Characteristic	Frequency	Percent
Type of Control		
Independent	68	75.0
Franchise/National Chain	22	25.0
Union Status		
Unionized	17	18.9
Non-unionized	73	81.1
Number of Locations		
One	44	49.4
Two	15	16.9
3 to 21	30	33.7
Age (years)		
0 - 5	23	25.6
6 - 28	46	50.0
30 - 115	22	24.4
Number of Employees		
0 - 8	23	25.6
10 - 53	45	50.0
60 - 110	16	17.7
140 - 480	6	6.7

Number of employees. Agencies have between 0 and 480 employees, with a median of 25. (Note, the agency which indicated zero employees is a volunteer agency.) One quarter of the worksites have less than nine employees and 50% have between 10 and 53 employees. Twelve agencies have 100 or more employees in their unit, and of these, two have more than 200 employees.

Experiences Related to Persons with MMH

Data displayed in Table 4 present the number of agencies by the number of persons with MMH who have been given job training at the worksite, and the number of agencies which offered to hire persons with MMH.

Provision of work experience. Fifty-eight percent of respondents provided training to only one TVP student. Three to six TVP students were trained at the remaining worksites.

Forty-one percent of respondents indicated that they had provided training to persons with MMH who were not in the TVP.

Offer of employment. To determine how many employers had offered to hire persons with MMH, a new variable "Offer of Employment" was created by combining Questions 10 and 13 from the questionnaire. Fifty-two percent (n = 47) of respondents had offered to hire one or more persons with MMH, either from the TVP or from outside of the TVP,

Table 4

Experiences Related to Persons with MMH

Experience	Frequency	Percent
Provision of Work Experience		
TVP students		
1	52	58.4
2	17	19.1
3 - 6	20	22.5
Other Persons with MMH		
0	47	58.8
1	11	13.7
2 - 35	22	27.5
Offer of Employment		
Offered to hire persons with MMH	47	51.6
Did not offer to hire persons with MMH	44	48.4

and 48% (n = 44) had not offered to hire persons with MMH, either from the TVP, or outside of the TVP.

Discussion

While the cooperating employers of the TVP are heterogeneous with respect to type of service offered, size and age, they tend to be non-unionized private businesses which are independently operated. A breakdown of respondents revealed a diversity of private businesses -- 26% are light industrial; 33%, retail; 23%, service; and the remainder includes services such as insurance, recreation and rentals. Approximately one-half of the agencies have only one location in the Edmonton vicinity, are between 6 and 23 years of age, and have between 10 and 53 employees.

The majority of employers have provided training to only one TVP student and have not trained persons with MMH outside of the TVP. This suggests that generally the employers have had limited experiences with persons with MMH in the work environment.

It should be noted that only agencies which the TVP instructors believed would have entry level positions were contacted. Many industries remain untapped sources. As well, in a different economic base, the profile could have been different.

Although the respondents come from a sample of employers who have demonstrated an interest in either training and employing persons with MMH, only slightly over one-half of the respondents have offered to hire a person with MMH. This suggests that either the person accepted for training did not have the required skills or the employer had other reasons for not hiring the person.

An examination of the data for "offer of employment" and whether or not persons with MMH had the skills required for the assigned task revealed that only 57% of the agencies who perceived one or more TVP students to have all the skills required for the job have actually offered to hire a TVP student. This suggests that the decision not to hire is sometimes external to the individual being considered.

Although other reasons may exist, one explanation for this occurrence is some of the agencies, particularly public and non-profit agencies, are used by the TVP for training purposes and without the expectation that the student will be hired. The worksite is regarded by the instructors as providing valuable training to students who require more than one work experience.

Factors Which Influence the Hiring Decision

On a four-point Likert scale, respondents indicated the extent of their agreement that the listed applicant attributes and worksite factors would influence the hiring decision.

Applicant Attributes

Employers' perceptions of the influence of applicant attributes on the hiring decision are displayed in Table 5. All means are above 2.5, the mid-point of the scale. Ninety-seven percent of the respondents indicated that honesty would moderately or greatly influence their hiring decision; 96%, following instructions; 95%, the quality of work; 93%, responsibility and respect for authority; 92%, getting along with co-workers; and 91%, regard for safety, eagerness, reliability and enthusiasm. Only two applicant attributes, self-confidence and assertiveness, had less than 65% agreement.

Worksite Factors

Employers' perceptions of the influence of worksite factors on the hiring decision are displayed in Table 6. Other than the availability of low skill jobs, previous experience with persons with MMH, and counsellor recommendations, none of the factors were perceived as having much effect on the hiring decision. Only the first two items mentioned above had means above the mid-point of

Table 5

The Influence of Applicant Attributes on the Hiring Decision

Applicant attribute	Rank	Extent of Influence: None 1	Little 2	Moderate 3	Great 4	Mean
		Percent				
Honesty	1	2.2	1.1	24.2	72.5	3.67
Regard for safety	2.5	0.0	8.8	35.2	56.0	3.47
Quality of work	2.5	0.0	5.5	41.8	52.7	3.47
Eagerness to work	4.5	0.0	8.8	36.3	54.9	3.46
Follow instructions	4.5	0.0	4.4	45.1	50.5	3.46
Responsibility	6	0.0	6.6	41.8	51.6	3.45
Reliability	7	2.2	6.6	36.3	54.9	3.44
Co-operativeness	8	0.0	6.6	44.0	49.5	3.43
Get along with co-workers	9	1.1	6.6	45.1	47.3	3.38

table continues

Applicant attribute	Rank	Extent of Influence				Mean
		None 1	Little 2	Moderate 3	Great 4	
		Percent				
Respect for authority	10	0.0	6.6	51.6	41.8	3.35
Enthusiasm	11	2.2	6.6	47.3	44.0	3.33
Personal hygiene	12	0.0	12.1	48.4	39.6	3.27
Control emotions	13	0.0	15.6	55.6	28.9	3.13
Ability to communicate	14	0.0	18.7	52.7	28.6	3.10
Overall appearance	15	1.1	13.2	63.7	22.0	3.07
Amount of supervision	16.5	4.4	14.3	52.7	28.6	3.05
Appropriate questions	16.5	2.2	18.7	50.5	28.6	3.05
Productivity	18	5.6	14.4	50.0	30.0	3.04
Handling criticism	19	1.1	16.5	60.4	22.0	3.03
Initiative	20	2.2	19.8	51.6	26.4	3.02

table continues

Applicant attribute	Rank	Extent of Influence				Mean
		None 1	Little 2	Moderate 3	Great 4	
		Percent				
Social maturity	21	1.1	18.7	58.2	22.0	3.01
Variety of jobs	22	3.3	23.1	47.3	26.4	2.97
Adaptability to varying work schedules	23	3.3	28.6	47.3	20.9	2.86
Time to learn tasks	24	2.2	30.8	50.5	16.5	2.81
Problem solving skills	25	2.2	29.7	53.8	14.3	2.80
Self-confidence	26	3.3	33.0	57.1	6.6	2.67
Assertiveness	27	4.4	31.9	58.2	5.5	2.65

Table 6

The Influence of Worksite Factors on the Hiring Decision

Worksite factor	Rank	Extent of Influence				Mean
		None 1	Little 2	Moderate 3	Great 4	
		Percent				
Availability of low skill jobs	1	11.0	28.6	34.1	26.4	2.76
Previous experience	2	16.5	19.8	46.2	17.6	2.65
Counsellor recommendations	3	23.1	23.1	36.3	17.6	2.48
Personal interest	4	25.3	30.8	30.8	13.2	2.32
Agency services	5	24.2	38.5	25.3	12.1	2.25
Turnover rate	6	23.3	40.0	25.6	11.1	2.24
Customer/client opinions	7.5	30.0	30.0	26.7	13.3	2.23

table continues

Worksite factor	Rank	Extent of Influence				Mean
		None 1	Little 2	Moderate 3	Great 4	
		Percent				
Labour costs	7.5	30.0	28.9	28.9	12.2	2.23
Availability of non-handicapped applicants	9	34.1	31.9	28.6	5.5	2.05
Number of handicapped at worksite	10	41.1	26.7	22.2	10.0	2.01
Opinions of other workers	11	31.9	41.8	22.0	4.4	1.99
Policies for hiring	12	42.7	31.5	15.7	10.1	1.93
Policies for firing	13	43.3	37.8	13.3	5.6	1.81
Union policies	14	73.0	13.5	5.6	7.9	1.48

the scale.

Discussion

Data results indicate that although there is variance in the extent of importance employers attach to the applicant attributes, they regard all of them as being important relative to the hiring decision. This is in contrast to most of the worksite factors which employers viewed as having little influence on the hiring decision.

Of note, 64% of employers view that previous experience with a person with mental handicaps moderately or greatly influences the hiring decision. Almost one-half of the agencies which trained more than one TVP student offered to hire a TVP student, compared to 27% for agencies which had only trained one TVP student. This suggests that the more exposure that employers have with persons with MMH, the more likely they are to hire a person with MMH.

Employers' perceptions of the extent of influence which the listed applicant attributes would have on the hiring decision had means ranging from 2.65 to 3.67; and for worksite factors, from 1.48 to 2.76. A comparison of the data shows, that, except for self-confidence and assertiveness, all of the means of the worksite factors are less than the means of the applicant attributes. It appears that even if there were low skill jobs available,

and regardless of previous experience with persons with MMH, counsellor recommendations or a personal interest in the applicant, the job would not be offered to a person with MMH, unless the employer perceived the person to have the desired attributes.

Factors Associated with Employment of Persons with MMH

On a five-point Likert scale of disagreement to agreement, employers expressed views on the work-related attributes of persons with MMH and their impact on the worksite. As well, employers indicated how many TVP students they perceived had all the skills required for the assigned job.

Work-Related Attributes of Persons with MMH

Data in Table 7 describe employers' perceptions of the work-related attributes of persons with MMH. All but five of the 29 attributes are expressed in positive terms. The remaining five deal with additional time, supervision, or agency help which persons with MMH may require.

Ninety-six percent of the respondents perceived that persons with MMH require more supervision to learn new tasks, and 91%, that they require more time to learn new tasks. Eighty percent or more of the respondents agreed that persons with MMH are co-operative, honest, respectful, reliable, and have acceptable appearance.

Table 7

Work-Related Attributes of Persons with MMH

Attribute	Rank	Highly disagree 1	2	Undecided 3	4	Highly agree 5	Mean
		Percent					
Need more supervision for new tasks	1	0.0	2.2	2.2	44.0	51.6	4.45
Need more time to learn new tasks	2	0.0	2.2	6.6	47.3	44.0	4.33
Honest	3	3.3	2.2	6.6	59.3	28.6	4.08
Co-operative	4	0.0	6.6	8.8	56.0	28.6	4.07
Respect authority	5	1.1	4.4	7.8	61.1	25.6	4.06
Eager to work	6	1.1	7.7	14.3	44.0	33.0	4.00
Reliable	7	1.1	7.8	8.9	61.1	21.1	3.93
Acceptable appearance	8	0.0	9.9	7.7	67.0	15.4	3.88

table continues

Attribute	Rank	Highly disagree 1	2	Undecided 3	4	Highly agree 5	Mean
		Percent					
Acceptable hygiene	9	0.0	9.9	11.0	65.9	13.2	3.82
Responsible	10	1.1	6.6	20.9	56.0	15.4	3.78
Quality of work	11.5	1.1	6.6	17.6	64.8	9.9	3.76
Get along with co-workers	11.5	0.0	12.1	13.2	61.5	13.2	3.76
Follow instructions	13	2.2	13.2	7.7	63.7	13.2	3.73
Enthusiastic	14	3.3	9.9	23.1	47.3	16.5	3.64
Capable of competitive employment	15	4.4	15.4	19.8	45.1	15.4	3.52
Need more time to complete work	16	1.1	25.3	14.3	46.2	13.2	3.45

table continues

Attribute	Rank	Highly disagree 1	2	Undecided 3	4	Highly agree 5	Mean
		Percent					
Need more supervision after new tasks	17	3.3	26.4	14.3	40.7	15.4	3.38
Communicate satisfactorily	18	1.1	24.2	19.8	54.9	0.0	3.29
Act maturely	19	2.2	27.5	24.2	45.1	1.1	3.15
Ask questions appropriately	20	2.2	27.5	27.5	39.6	3.3	3.14
Can handle a variety of jobs	21	4.4	33.0	14.3	44.0	4.4	3.11
Control emotions	22	5.5	25.3	26.4	40.7	2.2	3.09
Handle criticism	23	4.4	28.6	28.6	35.2	3.3	3.04

table continues

Attribute	Rank	Highly disagree 1	2	Undecided 3	4	Highly agree 5	Mean
		Percent					
Can adapt to schedules	24	6.6	27.5	29.7	31.9	4.4	3.00
Require agency help	25	5.6	31.1	34.4	18.9	10.0	2.97
Can solve problems	26	4.4	40.7	34.1	20.9	0.0	2.71
Assertive	27	11.0	36.3	27.5	23.1	2.2	2.69
Take initiative	28	9.9	47.3	26.4	14.3	2.2	2.52
Self-confident	29	11.0	47.3	30.8	7.7	3.3	2.45

More respondents disagreed than agreed that persons with MMH require help by an outside agency.

Less than 50% of the respondents agreed that persons with MMH ask questions appropriately, act maturely, can handle a variety of jobs, control emotions, handle criticism, adapt to schedules, solve problems, act assertively, take initiative, and appear self-confident.

Over 25% of the respondents indicated that they were undecided if persons with MMH ask questions and handle criticism appropriately, control their emotions, require agency help, can adapt to schedules and solve problems, take initiative, and are self-confident.

Impact of Persons with MMH on the Worksite

Table 8 displays employers' perceptions of the impact that persons with MMH have on the worksite.

From 14% to 45% of the respondents were undecided, which suggests that many employers were either unable or unwilling to reveal their perceptions. Of the others, the majority viewed that hiring persons with MMH helps public image and is cost effective, but disagreed that hiring persons with MMH affects the job market for non-handicapped workers, reduces staff turnover, or increases the likelihood of accidents.

Table 8

Impact of Persons with MMH on the Worksite

Impact	Rank	Highly disagree 1	2	Undecided 3	4	Highly agree 5	Mean
		Percent					
Helps public image	1	7.7	13.2	40.7	28.6	9.9	3.20
Cost effective	2	9.9	23.1	27.5	33.0	6.6	3.03
Reduces staff turnover	3	6.6	25.3	45.1	18.7	4.4	2.89
Increases likelihood of accidents	4	17.6	38.5	26.4	16.5	1.1	2.45
Affects job market for non-handicapped	5	40.0	34.4	14.4	7.8	3.3	2.00

Have Required Skills

Employers perceptions of how many TVP students have all the skills required for a job at their worksite is displayed in Table 9. Sixty-five percent of employers perceived that one or more TVP students have all the skills required for the assigned job.

Table 9

Perceptions of Persons with MMH: Have Required Skills

Number of Students	Frequency	Percent
0	28	35.4
1	34	43.0
2	12	15.2
3 - 4	5	6.4

Discussion

The means for the majority of the work-related attributes are above the mid-point of the scale. This suggests the attitude of employers towards persons with MMH is positive. However, for 8 out of the 29 listed attributes, at least one-quarter of the respondents were

undecided, and for almost one-third, the majority viewed that the attribute was lacking in persons with MMH.

As the rank-order of the listed attributes declines, employers tend to have greater indecision as to whether or not they agree or disagree that the trait is an attribute of persons with MMH. This could suggest that: (1) employers are willing to state positive opinions, but they may be less inclined to state negative opinions; or (2) when their response is not positive, they may feel that they do not have enough information to make a decision. Employers may be hesitant to state a negative opinion, if, they believe, that with more information, they might have responded positively.

Thirty-four percent of employers were undecided as to whether or not persons with MMH require agency help. Of those who responded, the majority felt that agency help was not required. These results suggest that employment agencies and employers have differing views with respect to how agencies can help persons with MMH. Although no reasons were given for the low interest expressed by employers for agency help, perhaps time commitments in liaising with outside personnel should be considered.

Employers tend either not to have an opinion or disagree that hiring a person with MMH has an impact on the worksite. This indicates that the perceived impact of

persons with MMH is not a prime consideration for the hiring decision.

Sixty-five percent of employers indicated that one or more of the TVP students had the skills required for the job at their worksite. This indicates that there are suitable jobs for persons with MMH at the majority of the worksites.

Employability of Persons with MMH

The employability of persons with MMH can be inferred from: (1) a comparison of factors which influence the hiring decision to employers' perceptions of persons with MMH; (2) data resulting from Question 6 in Section II of the questionnaire, which asked specifically if persons with MMH are capable of competitive employment; and (3) employers' perceptions of persons with MMH as having the skills required for a job at their worksite.

Comparison of Work-Related Attributes to Applicant Attributes

Except for two items, "need agency help" and "capable of competitive employment," the items in Table 7 parallel the items in Table 5. As all applicant attributes are considered important for the hiring decision, it can be concluded that many of the factors which would influence the decision to hire are also perceived to be attributes

of persons with MMH. However, for almost one-third of the attributes (see p. 62) a discrepancy exists between what employers desire and how they perceive persons with MMH. These differences suggest that until a greater congruence exists between these attributes, persons lacking these skills may be regarded as not ready for competitive employment.

Quadrant analysis. Figure 2 displays the highest and lowest ranked variables for both employers' perceptions of MMH and the factors which influence the hiring decision. The variables were ranked according to their means.

While employers highly rate honesty, eagerness, reliability, co-operativeness and regard for safety as factors influencing the hiring decision, they also perceive persons with MMH as having these attributes.

Quality of work, the ability to follow instructions and responsibility also highly influence the hiring decision. Although, as work-related attributes of persons with MMH these are not the highest ranked, 70% or more of employers agreed that persons with MMH have them (see Table 7, p. 58).

Although employers perceive that persons with MMH require more supervision and time to learn new tasks, in terms of influencing the hiring decision these qualities are ranked 16th and 24th respectively (see Table 5, p. 51).

Figure 2. Quadrant analysis: Perceptions of persons with MMH by factors influencing the hiring decision.

Employers' Perceptions of Persons with MMH	Factors Influencing the Hiring Decision
HIGH RANKED	HIGH RANKED
Need more supervision to learn new tasks Need more time to learn learn new tasks Honest Co-operative Respect authority Eager to work Reliable	Honesty Regard for safety Quality of work Eagerness to work Follow instructions Responsibility Reliability Co-operativeness
LOW RANKED	LOW RANKED
Reduces staff turnover Can solve problems Assertive Take initiative Increases likelihood of accidents Self-confident Affects job market for non-handicapped	Customer/client opinions Labour costs Availability of non-handicapped applicants Number of handicapped at worksite Opinions of other workers Policies for hiring Policies for firing Union policies

Of the work-related attributes of persons with MMH which employers rank low, none are seen as highly influencing the hiring decision.

While employers highly rank the regard for safety as a factor which influences the hiring decision, they disagree that hiring a person with MMH increases the likelihood of accidents.

This analysis suggests that there is a congruence between the desired skills and the skills which persons with MMH have, and where the skills are lacking, employers indicate that they are not the most important considerations for the hiring decision.

Perceptions of the Capability of Persons with MMH for Competitive Employment

Data indicating employers' perceptions of the capability of persons with MMH to maintain competitive employment were presented earlier (see Table 7, p. 59). The mean score, on a 5-point Likert scale, is 3.52, and 60.5% of the respondents agree that persons with MMH are capable of competitive employment, 19.8% are undecided and 19.8%, disagree. This suggests that while the majority of employers perceive that persons with MMH are capable of competitive employment, some caution has to taken in generalizing this to all respondents.

Have Required Skills

Sixty-five percent of employers perceived that persons with MMH (TVP students), who were given training at their worksite, had all the skills required for the job. At agencies where the employer perceived that a TVP student did not have all the skills required, results should not be interpreted as an indication that the employer views that the person does not have the potential for competitive employment. That particular student may not have been suitable for that particular job, more time for training may have been required, or the job may not have been suitable for persons with MMH.

Discussion

Approximately 65% of employers indicated that one or more of the TVP students accepted for work experience had the skills required for the job, and 61% agreed that persons with MMH were competitively employable. The above suggests that employers generally perceive persons with MMH to be competitively employable.

Although some skills are lacking in persons with MMH, the analysis between the parallel attributes suggests that while the lack of these skills may affect their perceived employability, it would have little influence on the hiring decision.

Relationships of Employers' Perceptions to Employer Characteristics and Their Experiences with Persons with MMH

The relationships of employer perceptions to employer characteristics were explored by analysis of variance for 'place of work', and *t*-tests for 'type of control', 'union status' and 'offer of employment'. The purpose of exploring relationships was to determine: (1) which relationships exist between any variables which may affect the offer of employment to persons with MMH; and (2) if the perceptions could be applied to employers generally.

Applicant Attributes Relevant to Hiring

Table 10 displays statistically significant differences in means ($p \leq .05$) of employers' perceptions of the influence of applicant attributes on the hiring decision, by employer characteristics.

Out of the 27 applicant attributes, public institutions and agencies agreed to a greater extent than private businesses, that the following attributes would influence the hiring decision: eagerness to work, personal hygiene, getting along with co-workers, social maturity, a sense of responsibility, co-operativeness, responsiveness to criticism and time needed to learn new tasks.

Unionized agencies agreed to a greater extent than non-unionized agencies that the following applicant

Table 10

The Influence of Applicant Attributes on the Hiring Decision by Employer Characteristics ($p \leq .05$)

Employer characteristic	Applicant attribute	Group Means 1	Group Means 2
Place of Work			
1. Public institution/ agency	eagerness to work	3.73	3.33
2. Private business	personal hygiene	3.64	3.14
	get along with co-workers	3.73	3.20
	social maturity	3.36	2.88
	sense of responsibility	3.73	3.33
	co-operativeness	3.86	3.28
	responsiveness to criticism	3.41	2.88
	time to learn new tasks	3.00	2.27
Union Status			
1. Unionized	amount of supervision needed	3.59	2.93
2. Non-unionized	productivity record	3.53	2.92
	get along with co-workers	3.76	3.30
	co-operativeness	3.88	3.32
	responsiveness to criticism	3.35	2.95

table continues

Employer characteristic	Applicant attribute	Group Means 1	Group Means 2
	ability to communicate	3.41	3.02
	ability to follow instructions	3.71	3.40
	quality of work	3.77	3.40
	enthusiasm	3.65	3.26
Offer of Employment			
1. Offered to Hire	can do a variety of jobs	2.87	3.86
2. Did Not Offer to Hire	social maturity	3.32	3.55
	ability to solve problems	2.70	3.02

attributes would influence their hiring decision: ability to follow instructions, amount of supervision needed, productivity record, getting along with co-workers, co-operativeness, responsiveness to criticism, the ability to communicate, quality of work and enthusiasm.

Employers who had not offered to hire a person with MMH, in comparison to those who had offered to hire a person with MMH, attributed greater importance to the hiring decision for the following factors: the ability to do a variety of jobs, social maturity and the ability to solve problems.

Influence of Worksite Factors on the Hiring Decision

Table 11 displays statistically significant differences in means ($p \leq .05$) of employers' perceptions of the influence of worksite factors on the hiring decision, by employer characteristics.

Public institutions and agencies agreed to a greater extent than private business and non-profit agencies that union policies would influence their hiring decision, and to a greater extent than private business that policies for hiring the handicapped would influence this decision.

Independent agencies agreed to a greater extent than franchise and national chains that union policies and policies for hiring the handicapped would influence their hiring decision.

Table 11

The Influence of Worksite Factors on the Hiring Decision by Employer Characteristics ($p \leq .05$)

Employer characteristic	Worksite factors	Group Means 1	2	3
Place of Work				
1. Public institution/ agencies	union policies	2.41	1.20	1.17
2. Public non-profit	policies for hiring handicapped	2.50	2.40	1.63
3. Private business				
Type of Control				
1. Franchise/chain	union policies	1.09	1.59	
2. Independent	policies for hiring handicapped	1.52	2.08	
Union Status				
1. Unionized	union policies	2.65	1.18	
2. Non-unionized	opinions of other workers	2.41	1.89	
	opinions of client/customers	2.76	2.11	

table continues

Employer characteristic	Worksite factors	Group Means 1	2
Offer of Employment			
1. Offered to Hire	union policies	1.61	2.02
2. Did Not Offer to Hire	policies for firing	1.87	2.25
	policies for hiring handicapped	1.61	2.28
	opinions of clients/customers	2.02	2.45
	labour costs	1.91	2.57

Unionized agencies agreed to a greater extent than non-unionized agencies, that union policies, opinions of other workers and opinions of clients and customers would influence their hiring decision.

Employers who did not offer to hire persons with MMH agreed to a greater extent than employers who offered to hire persons with MMH that union policies, policies for firing, policies for hiring the handicapped, opinions of clients and customers and labour costs would influence their hiring decision.

Work-Related Attributes of Persons with MMH

Table 12 displays statistically significant differences in means ($p \leq .05$) of employers' perceptions of the work-related attributes of persons with MMH, by employer characteristics. Only seven statistically significant differences were found and no patterns existed for them.

Impact of Persons with MMH on the Worksite

No statistically significant differences ($p \leq .05$) between place of work, type of control, and offer of employment and the impact of persons with MMH on the worksite were found. However, unionized agencies agreed to a greater extent than non-unionized agencies, that hiring persons with MMH helps public image. (The mean for unionized agencies was 4.76, compared to 4.38 for non-

Table 12

Work-Related Attributes of Persons with MMH by Employer Characteristics

($p \leq .05$)

Employer characteristic	Work-Related Attributes	Group Means 1	2	3
Place of Work				
1. Public institution/ agency	is enthusiastic	4.09	4.00	3.40
2. Private non-profit	can adapt to schedules	2.68	3.64	
3. Private business	require more time to complete work	3.00	4.09	3.55
Type of Control				
1. Franchise/chain	can follow instructions	4.09	3.63	
2. Independent				
Union Status				
1. Unionized	need more supervision for new tasks	4.77	4.38	
2. Non-unionized				
Offer of Employment				
1. Offered to hire	have acceptable hygiene	3.64	4.02	
2. Did not offer to hire	control emotions	2.87	3.32	

unionized agencies.)

Discussion

Employer perceptions of persons with MMH are not generally associated with specific employer characteristics and can be attributed to the respondent group as a whole. However, public institutions and unionized agencies place greater importance on applicant attributes and worksite factors than do private businesses and non-unionized agencies. Franchises and national chains place greater importance on worksite factors than independent agencies. An examination of the data revealed that 88% of public institutions are unionized and this could explain similarities in findings for unions and public institutions. While there is no obvious rationale to account for the differences in perceptions by the employer characteristics cited, the awareness of these differences by employment placement personnel might be important considerations in the selection of the worksites.

One important consideration for this study is whether or not the offer to hire a person with MMH is associated with certain perceptions of persons with MMH. This information provides some insight into the factors and perceptions which may have influenced employers' past decisions to offer employment to persons with MMH. This

analysis has revealed three applicant attributes and five worksite factors which might have been concerns behind decisions made not to offer employment.

The implication is that these factors need to be considered by vocational program planners and designers in order to help persons with MMH to acquire the desired skills that they would be capable of learning and to find worksites where the skills, which are lacking, will not present obstacles to their employment.

Further, an awareness that policies and opinions of others may be determining factors suggests that more successful placements could be made at worksites which are independent and where the persons with MMH have minimal contact with customers.

Competitive Employment of Persons with MMH

Competitive employment occurs not only when an employer perceives that the applicant has the skills required for the job, but also when there is an opportunity for employment at the worksite.

Fifty-seven percent of the agencies which perceived that one or more TVP students had all the skills required for the job, offered to hire a TVP student. This suggests that, while employers generally perceive persons with MMH to be competitively employable at their worksite, the

offer of employment is contingent on circumstances external to the individual.

Additionally, employers who did not offer to hire persons with MMH placed more importance on worksite factors than employers who offered to hire persons with MMH. This provides further weight to the notion that the offer of employment may be based on factors external to the attributes of a potential employee.

Employers who have not offered to hire persons with MMH attached greater importance to social maturity, handling a variety of jobs and solving problems. These factors may inhibit the opportunities for competitive employment for persons with MMH. This suggests persons with MMH should be placed at worksites where there are routine, repetitive jobs. This does not imply that educators should not take a remedial approach to help persons acquire these skills, but rather that, as some skills are problematic for persons with MMH, placement agencies should seek jobs where the lack of these skills would not pose major obstacles to job success.

The availability of low skill jobs and previous experience with persons with MMH affect the hiring decision. As well, public institutions and unionized agencies placed greater importance on worksite factors than private businesses, and franchises and national

chains more importance on worksite factors than independent agencies. These findings suggest that non-unionized, independent agencies might be more open to hiring persons with MMH as they are often able to make unilateral decisions and are not as bound by their decisions.

Suggestions for Improving Opportunities for Competitive Employment of Persons with MMH

Subjective comments provided by the respondents are shown in Appendix 2. Comments were edited for grammar and clarity and categorized according to issues and reactions. Sixty-four percent of the respondents expressed comments.

There were recommendations directed to persons with MMH to develop skills through volunteer work and the importance of a positive outlook was stressed. Recommendations to employers included the following: streamlining jobs to meet individual needs; a "buddy" system; normal treatment of persons with MMH; and the importance of providing good supervision.

Most employer comments were directed to counsellors and educators. Eight comments recommended that persons who provide training, placement, or education to persons with MMH, should match jobs to the individual's skills and interests and treat persons with MMH as they would treat others. They should also provide more work experience

placements, encourage persons with MMH to ask questions, involve parents in the work placement, and provide more information to employers.

Seven comments were made regarding the need for more low skill jobs and six comments identified a need for more government subsidization. Other comments included creating greater public awareness of the employability of persons with MMH, being empathetic to the needs of persons with MMH, increased support services, understanding employers' needs, matching salaries to performance, budget constrictions, productivity concerns and employer dissatisfaction with employing or training persons with MMH.

Summary

There is a wide diversity of employers interested in the training and employment of persons with MMH. However, the majority of employers tend to be non-unionized, independent private businesses with medium sized, established worksites. Employers have demonstrated an interest in persons with MMH by providing them training and 52% of the employers have offered them employment.

Employers perceive that all of the listed applicant attributes influence the hiring decision, and except for the availability of low skill jobs and previous experience

with persons with MMH, that worksite factors have little influence.

While many employers were undecided or reluctant to express opinions, employers generally have a positive attitude towards persons with MMH. They also perceive that hiring a person with MMH will not have much impact on the worksite.

A comparison of applicant attributes to the work-related attributes of persons with MMH suggests that while many factors considered important for hiring are also attributes of the MMH population, the following are lacking: social maturity, assertiveness, initiative, self-confidence, asking appropriate questions, handling a variety of jobs and schedules, controlling emotions, accepting criticism, and solving problems.

This study found that the perceived employability of persons with MMH is generally positive, but that some persons with MMH have skill deficits which may inhibit their opportunities for employment. Results also suggest that employers may be willing to provide extra supervision and time for training in return for desired attributes.

Perceived employability does not translate to an offer of employment. Only 57% of agencies where TVP students had all the skills required for the job offered to hire a person with MMH. This suggests that the

potential for employment is sometimes attributed to factors external to a potential employee.

Employers' perceptions of persons with MMH and the factors influencing the hiring decision generally are not influenced by employer characteristics. These findings suggest that the attitudes toward persons with MMH and their perceived importance of factors which influence the hiring decision can be generalized to all respondents.

However, employers who have not offered to hire persons with MMH agree to a greater extent than employers who offered to hire persons with MMH, that policies, opinions of clients and customers, labour costs, the social maturity of the applicants, their ability to do a variety of jobs and to solve problems influence the hiring decision. Persons involved in the vocational education, training and placement of persons with MMH should consider these factors as potential obstacles to the competitive employment of persons with MMH. Agencies which can make independent decisions, and where there are routine, repetitive jobs with minimal customer contacts appear to be the best prospects for the successful employment of persons with MMH.

Employers who had accepted more than one TVP student for work experience were more likely to hire a person with MMH. This suggests that exposure to persons with MMH

increases the likelihood of the offer to hire and that employment placement personnel should consider re-using existing sites.

Although employers generally show low interest in agency help, they also indicate that counsellor recommendations influence the hiring decision. Placement personnel who have a clear understanding of the job tasks and a knowledge of the attributes which employers consider most important will be more prepared to find a worksite placement which is mutually beneficial for both the employer and the person with MMH.

Employer suggestions to improve opportunities for competitive employment of persons with MMH include good supervision, a buddy system, increased government subsidization and streamlining of jobs. They also recommend that counsellors should match jobs to the individual's needs and interests, encourage persons with MMH to ask questions, involve parents and provide more information to employers.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This study investigated, from the perspective of employers, factors associated with the employment of persons with mild mental handicaps (MMH) with the purpose of gaining some insights into their potential for employment.

The intent of the study was to provide information which would be useful to educators for the planning and development of vocational programs and to vocational placement agencies and counsellors in the selection of suitable training sites and employment options for persons with MMH.

A questionnaire was mailed to 160 employers, who had provided work experience to persons with MMH. The study assumed that these employers have a potential interest in the potential employability of persons with MMH and that they are typical of employers who have jobs which are suitable for persons with MMH. The study was delimited to an urban area in Alberta, to employers who participated in a selected work experience program for persons with MMH between January 1983 and June 1988.

Fifty-seven percent of employers (n = 91) responded to the survey. A comparison of respondents to non-respondents indicated that public agencies, franchises and national chains, and unions were over represented approximately two to one, suggesting that some bias could exist in the data.

Parametric and non-parametric statistics were computed using SPSS/PC+ and employers' comments were summarized.

Findings

The sub-problems are restated below and the findings related to them are reported:

1. What are the characteristics of responding employers? Employers are from the public and private sectors and they encompass a wide variety of services. However, a profile of the responding employer emerges as an agency which tends to be an independent, private retail business with only one location in the Edmonton vicinity. The worksite is likely to be non-unionized, between the ages of 6 and 28 years, and has from 10 to 53 employees. The majority of the employers have trained only one person from the TVP and have not trained persons with MMH outside of the TVP. Fifty-two percent of the employers have offered to hire a person with MMH.

2. What applicant attributes are perceived by employers to influence the hiring decision? All applicant attributes examined in this study are perceived as influencing employers' hiring decisions. Honesty was of prime importance. Over 90% of employers view that the regard for safety, quality of work, eagerness to work, ability to follow instructions and to get along with co-workers, sense of responsibility, and respect for authority, would influence the hiring decision.

3. What worksite factors are perceived by employers to influence the hiring decision? Employers perceive that the availability of low skill jobs and previous experience with persons with MMH influence the hiring decision. Other worksite factors are generally perceived as having little influence on the hiring decision.

4. What are employers' perceptions of the work-related attributes of persons with MMH? Employers perceive that persons with MMH have the majority of the listed work-related attributes. Highest ranked were that persons with MMH require more supervision and time for new tasks. Employers also rate persons with MMH high in honesty, co-operativeness, respect for authority, and eagerness. They perceive that persons with MMH are lacking the following: the ability to ask questions, handle criticism, and control emotions appropriately,

social maturity, versatility, problem solving skills, assertiveness, initiative and self-confidence.

For the following work-related attributes over 25% of the respondents were undecided: the ability to ask questions or control emotions appropriately, requirements for agency help, adaptability to schedules, adequate problem solving skills, initiative, and self-confidence.

5. What are employers' perceptions of the impact on the worksite of hiring persons with MMH? Employers perceive that hiring persons with MMH helps public image and is cost effective. However, over 40% of employers were undecided about whether or not hiring a person with MMH helps public image and reduces staff turnover. Over 50% of employers disagree that hiring a person with MMH increases the likelihood of accidents or affects the job market for non-handicapped workers.

6. What are employers' perceptions concerning the potential employability of persons with MMH? Employers generally regard persons with MMH to have the potential for competitive employment. Sixty-one percent of employers perceive that persons with MMH have the potential for competitive employment, and 65%, that they have demonstrated employability for the tasks to which they were assigned. Although some skills are lacking in persons with MMH, these skills are not highly rated as

influencing the hiring decision. This suggests that these skills may have some impact on employers' perceptions of the employability of persons with MMH, but not to the extent that it would greatly influence the hiring decision.

7. What relationships exist between employers' perceptions and employers' characteristics? Only seven statistically significant differences were found in employers' perceptions of the work-related attributes of persons with MMH, indicating that employers' perceptions of persons with MMH are not associated with specific employer characteristics.

Some sub-group differences were found in employers' perceptions of factors which influence the hiring decision, but for the most part, these were also similar. Public agencies place greater importance on the following applicant factors than do private businesses: eagerness to work, personal hygiene, ability to get along with co-workers, social maturity, sense of responsibility, co-operativeness, responsiveness to criticism and time to learn new tasks.

Unionized agencies place greater importance on the amount of supervision needed, productivity, ability to get along with others, communicate and follow instructions, co-operativeness, responsiveness to criticism, enthusiasm,

and quality of work.

Public institutions and agencies, franchises and national chains place greater importance on union policies and policies for hiring the handicapped than do private business and independent agencies.

Unionized agencies place greater importance on union policies and opinions of other workers, clients and customers than do non-unionized agencies.

Employers who have not offered to hire persons with MMH agree to a greater extent than employers who have offered to hire persons with MMH that the following factors would influence the hiring decision: ability to do a variety of jobs and adequately solve problems, social maturity, agency policies, opinions of clients and customers and labour costs.

8. What factors contribute to the competitive employment of persons with MMH? The skills which persons with MMH have or lack, worksite factors, the characteristics of the employers, and employment support contribute to the competitive employment of persons with MMH.

Employers generally perceive persons with MMH to be capable of competitive employment, and their attitudes toward persons with MMH are generally positive, yet not all persons with MMH get hired. The differences in

perceptions of employers who have and have not offered to hire persons with MMH suggest that the difficulties encountered by persons with MMH in acquiring social maturity, handling a variety of jobs and solving problems may inhibit their opportunities for employment.

Additionally, agency policies, opinions of clients and customers and labour costs may be critical to the hiring decision and may present obstacles for persons with MMH in obtaining employment.

These findings suggest that agencies which have routine, repetitive jobs where there would be few interactions with customers and where the hiring decision can be made independently, hold the best prospects for employment of persons with MMH.

Employers recommend that measures could be taken such as good supervision, a buddy system and streamlining of jobs in order to help persons with MMH become competitive. They also indicate that counsellors should match jobs to individual needs and interests, provide more work experience placement, encourage persons with MMH to ask questions, involve parents and provide more information to employers. Comments regarding government subsidization suggest an additional measure which could be taken to increase the opportunities for employment of persons with mental handicaps. Subsidizations might enable employers

to provide the extra time and supervision required to help persons with mental handicaps to develop competitive skills.

Conclusions

This section discusses some conclusions arising from the findings of this study.

1. Employers' attitudes toward persons with MMH are generally positive and present employment opportunities. Employers perceive that persons with MMH have the majority of the work-related skills listed in this study. Although they also indicate that persons with MMH have some work-related deficiencies, this does not indicate that they are prejudiced against persons with MMH.

The work-related difficulties which they perceive persons with MMH to have, probably exist. The intellectual limitations of persons with MMH affect their versatility, ability to solve problems, social maturation, self-confidence, assertiveness, ability to perceive the intent of criticism and understanding of how to handle emotions. Similar findings of these skill deficits have been noted in the literature (Greenspan & Shoultz, 1981; Hill & Wehman, 1980; Mueller & Wilgosh, 1985; Schalock & Harper, 1981).

The employers in this study have not only indicated a positive attitude towards persons with MMH, but have also demonstrated this attitude by providing opportunities for persons with MMH to develop employment skills. This finding is in contrast to Wilgosh & Skaret (1987) who, after a review of related literature, concluded that employers' attitudes toward hiring the disabled are an impediment to their employment. The contrast in these findings suggest that there may be a difference in the attitudes of employers who have accepted persons with MMH for work experience to those who have not accepted persons with MMH for work experience.

2. Employers generally perceive persons with MMH to have the potential for competitive employment. This conclusion supports similar findings in the literature (Fahy & McLean, 1987; Juergens, 1979; Parent & Everson, 1986; Stewart, 1977). The skills which employers perceive to be lacking in persons with MMH are not highly ranked by employers as factors which influence the hiring decision.

3. The prospects of competitive employment of persons with MMH are generally good, but within a limited range of jobs. Persons with MMH, because of their intellectual limitations, perform best in routine, repetitive jobs. As opinions of customers and clients may be determinants in the decision not to offer employment, jobs which offer

limited contact with customers and clients may increase the prospects for competitive employment for persons with MMH.

An optimistic note is that the diversity of employers in this study suggests opportunities for employment for persons with MMH in a variety of industries. Further, in spite of this diversity, the potential market for employment of persons with MMH has barely been tapped in Alberta.

Industries involved in the development of natural resources are a vital part of Alberta's economy and are an untapped potential for employment of persons with MMH. The growth of service industries is expected to increase with changes in lifestyles and an older population. More low skill jobs, particularly in recreation and personal care, will be required to meet the needs of senior citizens. The hospitality industries, especially food services, will have more jobs for people in areas such as bussing, food preparation, janitorial and light maintenance.

4. The potential for employment for persons with MMH is affected by a variety of factors. The potential for employment for persons with MMH is contingent on the individual's skills, worksite factors and employment supports.

Applicant attributes appear to be more critical for the decision to hire a person with MMH than for the decision not to hire a person with MMH. Further, counsellor recommendations and previous experience with persons with MMH increase the potential for the offer of employment.

Worksite factors may be more critical than applicant attributes for the decision not to hire. Only 57% of employers hired a person with MMH, even though the person had the skills required for the job. Labour costs, opinions of customers and co-workers, agency policies, and the availability of low skill jobs may present obstacles to the employment of persons with MMH.

5. Educators and counsellors who serve persons with MMH can do more to help their clients secure and maintain competitive employment. A knowledge and application of the findings of this study will facilitate Alberta agencies and educators in the training and vocational placement of persons with MMH. If educators and counsellors were to direct their efforts, to both the factors which highly influence the decision of employers to hire or not to hire persons with MMH, and to the types of jobs and employers which have the best prospects for employment, employment opportunities for persons with MMH should increase.

6. The findings in this study generally apply to all respondents. This study found that employers' perceptions of persons are not associated with the type of agency, union status and type of control. Additionally, the employers, in this study, offer a diversity of services. These findings suggest that the results of this study are generalizable to all respondents and may be generalizable to other employers with a similar interest in persons with MMH.

Although the diverse nature of the employers suggests that a generally supportive attitude may prevail, the study conducted by Gibson and Groeneweg (1986), which had a respondent group of over 3000 employers from a diverse range of industries in Alberta, indicated that employer receptivity to accepting job inquiries from handicapped individuals was largely negative. Therefore, further inquiry is needed to determine if employers who have accepted persons with MMH for work experience are more inclined to have a positive attitude towards persons with MMH than employers who have not accepted persons with MMH for work experience.

Recommendations

This section provides recommendations to vocational placement agencies and counsellors, educators and

vocational trainers, and to persons interested in further research related to the employment of persons with MMH.

Vocational Placement Agencies and Counsellors

1. Concentrate on routine, repetitive jobs where there is limited contact with customers. While the intellectual functioning of persons with MMH is subject to development, there is an upper limit which must be acknowledged. This suggests that certain skills may remain fairly constant. Therefore, continued efforts should be made to secure jobs which provide the best prospects for success.

2. Offer a variety of work experience in a variety of jobs. Provide students with several worksites to enable them to become more versatile, thereby giving them options for future employment.

Agencies which are regarded as prospective employers should be given preference over agencies which are regarded as training sites only. Placement at a worksite which is unlikely to hire decreases the opportunities for persons with MMH to obtain experiences at worksites where there are realistic expectations and demands.

3. Seek independent agencies. Franchises and national chains and unions tend to put more emphasis on hiring policies than do independent agencies. Agency policies for hiring and firing may be major determinants

of the decision not to hire. Employers at independent agencies often do not have to account for their decisions to hire or to fire, and therefore, they may not feel as bound by the decisions as would personnel at unionized agencies or franchises and national chains.

4. Promote the strengths of the individual. Be aware of the attributes which employers value -- honesty, regard for safety, quality of work, eagerness to work, ability to follow instructions and to get along with others, reliability, enthusiasm, responsibility and respect for authority. If the client (that is, a person with a MMH), is strong in some of these areas, emphasize them when making a placement.

5. Promote the agency. Employers tend to disagree or are unsure whether or not persons with MMH require agency help, yet they indicate that counsellor recommendations have some influence on the hiring decision. Clearly outline to employers the role which agencies have in helping both employers and clients to meet their needs.

Educators.

1. Be knowledgeable of the problematic areas for persons with MMH. Be knowledgeable of the attributes which employers value and note that social maturity, the ability to do a variety of jobs, and problem solving skills may be determinants in the decision not to hire.

Where these are lacking, educators should assume a remedial position and try to facilitate their acquisition.

2. Educate employers. Employer indecision of work-related attributes of persons with MMH and their impact on the worksite indicates that more education is required to develop an awareness of the capabilities of persons with MMH.

Further Research

1. Conduct a similar study using a four-point Likert scale to measure employers' perceptions of persons with MMH and their impact on the worksite. The indecision expressed by employers in this study suggests that the results might have been different if a 4-point scale, with 'undecided' omitted or equal to zero, had been used to measure employers' perceptions of the work-related attributes of persons with MMH and the impact that persons with MMH have on the worksite. Therefore, it is recommended that a study be conducted, using a 4-point Likert scale, where there is a similar population and vocational program.

2. Conduct a similar study with employers who have not trained persons with MMH. The findings in the literature, in contrast to the findings in this study, indicate that negative attitudes inhibit the ability of persons with handicaps to obtain employment. More inquiry

is needed to determine reasons for these differences, and in particular, how the views of the population selected for this study compare to views of employers who have not previously accepted a person with MMH for training.

3. Conduct a study from the perspective of persons with MMH. Factors outside of the conceptual framework for this study may provide further insights into the potential for employment for persons with MMH. A study from the perspective of persons with MMH might indicate that other factors such as motivation, personal difficulties, or the lack of support systems, may affect their potential for employment.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

COVER LETTER AND SURVEY

alberta
vocational
centre
edmonton

110

10215 - 108 STREET
EDMONTON, ALBERTA T5J 1L6

TELEPHONE (403) 427-2741

November 30, 1988.

[CONTACT PERSON],
[DEPARTMENT]
[COMPANY NAME],
[ADDRESS],
[CITY/PROVINCE],

Dear [GREETING],

I am an instructor in the Transitional Vocational Program at Alberta Vocational Centre, Edmonton. As part of my research for the completion of a Master's Degree in Education, at the University of Alberta, I am conducting a survey related to employment of persons with a mild mental handicap.

The purpose of this survey is to obtain information about the placement of persons with a mild mental handicap (slower learners) into competitive employment. The responses will be analyzed to find out the extent to which the respondents believe that persons with a mild mental handicap have the potential to maintain competitive employment.

This survey is being sent to employers who have participated in the work experience component of the Transitional Vocational Program, for they have had a direct involvement in working with persons with a mild mental handicap. (Prior to 1984, the program was called 'Employment Skills')

The anonymity of all respondents will be assured. A code number on the back of the return envelope will be used only for purposes of recording returns. Results of this study should be available by May 1989 and can be obtained upon request.

Your completion of the questionnaire by December 15, 1988 would be greatly appreciated. If you have any questions regarding the questionnaire, please call me at 422-5387.

Sincerely,

Bev

Bev Cooper

SURVEY OF THE EMPLOYABILITY OF PERSONS WITH A MILD MENTAL HANDICAP

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DO NOT WRITE
IN THIS SPACE

1 2 3 4

SECTION I

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Please respond to the following by checking the appropriate responses.

1. Which category best describes your place of work? (Check only ONE)

public institution/agency.....	_____1	5
private non-profit agency/organization..	_____2	
private business.....	_____3	
other (Please specify)_____..	_____4	

2. Which category most closely resembles the type of service or product of your business, agency or institution? (Check only ONE)

				6,7
distribution.	_____1	auto service/repair.	____ 8	
retail.....	_____2	janitorial.....	____ 9	
wholesale....	_____3	hotel.....	____10	
rental.....	_____4	restaurant.....	____11	
health care..	_____5	laundry..... ..	____12	
daycare.....	_____6	other(Please specify)	____13	
packaging....	_____7			

_____

3. Are you part of either a franchise or national chain?

yes.....	_____1	8
no.....	_____2	

4. How many locations does your business, agency or institution have in Edmonton?_____ 9

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5. How long has this work place been in operation?_____ 10/11

6. Is the staff unionized? 12

yes..... _____1
no..... _____2

7. How many people are employed in your unit? _____ 13/14

8. How many students from the Transitional Vocational Program have been accepted for work experience in your unit? _____ 15

9. On completion of their work experience, how many of the students from the Transitional Vocational Program had all the skills required for the job? _____ 16

10. On completion of their work experience, how many persons from the Transitional Vocational Program did you offer to hire? _____ 17

11. What was the MAIN TASK done by the most recent student from the Transitional Vocational Program? (Check only ONE) 18/19

clerical.....	____1	daycare assistance....	_____ 8
sales	____2	food preparation.....	_____ 9
assembly.....	____3	dishwashing/bussing...	_____10
janitorial.....	____4	shipping/receiving....	_____11
maintenance.....	____5	pricing/ stocking.....	_____12
delivery.....	____6	other (Please specify)	_____13
repair.....	____7		

_____

12. Other than students from the Transitional Vocational Program, how many persons with a mild mental handicap have been accepted for work experience in your unit? _____ 20/21

13. Other than students from the Transitional Vocational Program, how many persons with a mild mental handicap have you offered to hire?_____ 22/23

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SECTION II

EMPLOYABILITY OF PERSONS WITH A MILD MENTAL HANDICAP

This section asks for your opinions about persons with a mild mental handicap. These opinions may not necessarily reflect your opinions of the person(s) with mild mental handicaps that you have supervised.

Please indicate the extent to which the following statements reflect your own views about persons with a mild mental handicap.

Highly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Undecided	Moderately Agree	Highly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

	HD	MD	U.	MA	HA	
1. Persons with a mild mental handicap generally are:						
a) reliable	1	2	3	4	5	24
b) responsible	1	2	3	4	5	25
c) honest	1	2	3	4	5	26
d) self-confident	1	2	3	4	5	27
e) enthusiastic	1	2	3	4	5	28
f) assertive	1	2	3	4	5	29
g) co-operative	1	2	3	4	5	30
2. Persons with a mild mental handicap:						
a) get along well with co-workers	1	2	3	4	5	31
b) can do a variety of jobs	1	2	3	4	5	32
c) adapt to changes in scheduling	1	2	3	4	5	33
d) take initiative	1	2	3	4	5	34
e) follow instructions	1	2	3	4	5	35
f) handle criticism appropriately	1	2	3	4	5	36
g) control their emotions	1	2	3	4	5	37

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Please indicate the extent to which the following statements reflect your own views.

Highly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Undecided	Moderately Agree	Highly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

	HD	MD	U	MA	HA	
3. Persons with a mild mental handicap generally require:						
a) more supervision than other employees when they are learning new tasks	1	2	3	4	5	38
b) more time to learn new tasks	1	2	3	4	5	39
c) more supervision than other employees after they have learned new tasks	1	2	3	4	5	40
d) more time to get the work done than other employees	1	2	3	4	5	41
e) help by an outside agency	1	2	3	4	5	42
4. Persons with a mild mental handicap generally:						
a) have acceptable appearance	1	2	3	4	5	43
b) have acceptable hygiene	1	2	3	4	5	44
c) act maturely	1	2	3	4	5	45
d) communicate satisfactorily	1	2	3	4	5	46
e) have adequate problem-solving skills	1	2	3	4	5	47
f) respect authority	1	2	3	4	5	48
g) maintain a satisfactory quality of work	1	2	3	4	5	49
h) ask questions appropriately	1	2	3	4	5	50
i) are eager to do the work	1	2	3	4	5	51

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Please indicate the extent to which the following statements reflect your own views.

Highly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Undecided	Moderately Agree	Highly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

	HD	MD	U	MA	HA	
5. Hiring persons with a mild mental handicap						
a) affects the job market for non-handicapped workers	1	2	3	4	5	52
b) is cost-effective	1	2	3	4	5	53
c) increases the likelihood of accidents	1	2	3	4	5	54
d) reduces staff turnover	1	2	3	4	5	55
e) helps public image	1	2	3	4	5	56
6. Persons with a mild mental handicap are capable of competitive employment	1	2	3	4	5	57

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SECTION III

FACTORS AFFECTING THE DECISION TO HIRE OR NOT TO HIRE AT YOUR WORKSITE

Please indicate the extent to which the following factors would influence your DECISION TO HIRE OR NOT TO HIRE a person with a mild mental handicap.

Not At All	Little Extent	Moderate Extent	Great Extent
1	2	3	4

	Extent of Influence (None <--------> Great)				
Part A: Applicant Characteristics					
1. Productivity record.....	1	2	3	4	58
2. Reliability record.....	1	2	3	4	59
3. Respect for authority.....	1	2	3	4	60
4. Ability to do a variety of jobs.....	1	2	3	4	61
5. Amount of supervision required...	1	2	3	4	62
6. Eagerness to do the work	1	2	3	4	63
7. Overall appearance.....	1	2	3	4	64
8. Personal hygiene.....	1	2	3	4	65
9. Ability to get along with co-workers.....	1	2	3	4	66
10. Social Maturity	1	2	3	4	67
11. Honesty.....	1	2	3	4	68
12. Sense of responsibility	1	2	3	4	69
13. Co-operativeness	1	2	3	4	70
14. Responsiveness to criticism.....	1	2	3	4	71

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Please indicate the extent to which the following factors would influence your DECISION TO HIRE OR NOT TO HIRE a person with a mild mental handicap.

Not At All	Little Extent	Moderate Extent	Great Extent
1	2	3	4

	Extent of Influence (None <--------> Great)				
A. Applicant Characteristics					
15. Ability to control emotions.....	1	2	3	4	72
16. Ability to communicate	1	2	3	4	73
17. Ability to solve problems.....	1	2	3	4	74
18. Ability to follow instructions....	1	2	3	4	75
19. Adaptability to varying work schedules.....	1	2	3	4	76
20. Initiative	1	2	3	4	77

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1 2 3 4

21. Quality of work.....	1	2	3	4	5
22. Ability to ask appropriate questions.....	1	2	3	4	6
23. Self-confidence.....	1	2	3	4	7
24. Assertiveness.....	1	2	3	4	8
25. Enthusiasm.....	1	2	3	4	9
26. Amount of time needed to learn new tasks.....	1	2	3	4	10
27. Regard for safety precautions.....	1	2	3	4	11

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Please indicate the extent to which the following factors would influence your DECISION TO HIRE OR NOT TO HIRE a person with a mild mental handicap.

Not At All	Little Extent	Moderate Extent	Great Extent
1	2	3	4

	Extent of Influence None <-------> Great				
Part B: Work-site Factors					
1.Staff turnover rate	1	2	3	4	12
2.Union policies.....	1	2	3	4	13
3.Opinions of other workers.....	1	2	3	4	14
4.Personal interest in applicant.....	1	2	3	4	15
5.Previous experience with a person with a mental handicap....	1	2	3	4	16
6.Availability of low-skill jobs.....	1	2	3	4	17
7.Policies for firing/laying off ...	1	2	3	4	18
8.Existing number of handicapped at the worksite	1	2	3	4	19
9.Availability of a non-handicapped applicant.....	1	2	3	4	20
10.Policies for employing persons with handicaps.....	1	2	3	4	21
11.Opinions of clients/customers.....	1	2	3	4	22
12.Labour costs.....	1	2	3	4	23
13.Availability of agency services...	1	2	3	4	24
14.Recommendation of placement counsellor.....	1	2	3	4	25
15. Other Work-Site Factors (Please specify)					
_____	1	2	3	4	26
_____	1	2	3	4	27

COMMENTS

It is hoped that information in this section will provide further insights into the employability of persons with a mild mental handicap. Please use the back of this sheet for any further comments which you would like to contribute.

1.What suggestions do you have for improving the employability of persons with a mild mental handicap?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. General Comments

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

PLEASE RETURN THE QUESTIONNAIRE IN THE ENCLOSED ENVELOPE BY DECEMBER 15, 1988.

I APPRECIATE THE TIME THAT YOU TOOK TO COMPLETE THE QUESTIONNAIRE. THANK-YOU.

APPENDIX 2

EMPLOYERS' COMMENTS

EMPLOYERS' COMMENTS

Reactions

Be a Volunteer

Encourage individuals with MMH to develop skills (social and otherwise) by volunteering on a regular basis with various agencies.

The same criteria reliability, accountability , etc. are required in volunteer positions as paid staff positions.

Attitudes

Have a more positive outlook on the job and life in general. Do not to be afraid to try.

They [MMH] have to get goals and careers that are realistic and within reach - not everybody is the same. They have to enjoy what they do and build self-esteem and confidence. They must do their best at whatever they do and think of the best interests of the workplace where they work.

Buddy System

Buddy the person [MMH] with a regular employee.

Under certain conditions a "buddy system" may be effective.

Treatment of Persons with MMH

In every work situation the treatment of persons with MMH should be as nearly normal as possible. There should be realistic, as opposed to phoney expectations.

Supervision

Where extensive supervision is required, have work teams with a capable supervisor.

The person that we have taken from the TVP program has done well and with the right supervision is now a permanent employee. Who is supervising makes a world of difference.

Match Jobs to Skills and Interests

Do some preliminary research on the candidate first to see where their skills might lie and then try to place them into that field.

The students should be evaluated to the type of industry they are most suited for, previous to their interview, using suggestions from professionals in those industries.

Perhaps have the counsellors seek out the types of skills and tasks the placement worksite needs and then choose the most suitable students.

Make sure the workplace is not putting undue expectations as their priority.

I feel that great deal depends on the extent of the handicap as to where the person should be sent for employment.

Certain tasks were appropriate, but the general job description was not suitable (office work) - too complex for most of the tasks.

Try to get people into an area of interest rather than just a job.

There should be training programs for specific service sectors.

Categorization

Do not put them [MMH] in a category for the employer. Let the employer and employee work that out.

We experienced the need to look at each individual case.

Persons with MMH must be rated individually - they can not be grouped. Like other employees, some are good to excellent, some are not meant for retail.

Persons with MMH need to be treated the same as other staff.

Provide More Work Experience

Try to provide more than one work experience session.
Increase the amount of work experience in a variety of settings.

Increase work experience prior to placement/ employment. Provide more on-site training in the workplace.

Encourage Students to Ask Questions

Encourage students to feel free to ask many questions of employer - they are sometimes shy or hesitant.

Involve Parents

Parents interest is important. Their interference is a negative factor. AVC counsellor should arrange a brief meeting with parents and employer.

Provide Information to Employers

I am unsure of how much is really understood by MMH when something is explained to them.

Salaries

I think that the greatest impairment to hiring a mildly mentally handicapped person is the inability for me to pay an individual according to their worth, that is, productivity plus quality. (Unionized environment)

There should be realistic rewards and remuneration.

I feel it is not proper for any company to give lower wages for persons with MMH.

Budgets

In our workplace, we can use persons with MMH as a work experience but we have no employment on a full-time basis. We do not have wages allotted for these type of jobs. They are normally done by our regular staff as part of normal work load.

Our budget does not allow for extra staff to be hired in an assisting position.

Need more supervisory time for proper on the job training - less staff cutbacks would probably help.

There doesn't seem to be enough time for training.

Productivity

Persons with MMH can not be more than a 75% "all around" worker in dental lab work.

Their (MMH) acceptance by staff is directly related to productivity.

Employers expect top quality performance for the salaries and benefits that are paid - stress factor is very high.

Appreciation and Enjoyment

The slower learner may need more supervision than regular employees but the dedication and interest they bring with them more than makes up for that.

The mentally handicapped that we have dealt with have varied considerably in their ability to meet specific job requirements.

MMH people are a valuable resource in our community. If placed in the right areas where their skills can be brought out they would be an asset to an employer.

I enjoy having the students around.

We enjoy having a slower learner at our place of work. They are good, hardworking people.

I find that a person with a mental handicap will be more dedicated to their employment once they can be trained.

Certain jobs require certain qualities and everyone's qualities given the right circumstances, has its place. The mild mental handicapped person we hired is a great help to our company and if the occasion arises again, I would not hesitate to fill the position with another such person.

In general, I have been very happy with the employability of students from TVP. Currently. two

grads are employed by us - one on a permanent basis. In our case the grad also requires a Building Service Worker certificate before we can employ them, so they must be able to perform at a fairly high level.

I enjoyed having a mildly handicapped person working in the daycare - I feel that she enhanced the children's experiences with persons of varied socio-economic and educational backgrounds

We have only had experience with one worker who fitted in well and acquired some self-confidence on the job. He worked well with co-workers and supervisors and was liked by all.

Good learning experience for students and certainly helps the placement work-site especially when amount of supervision and instruction is reduced as students learn.

Dissatisfaction

I have had many handicapped people on job training. In most cases, these people have cost the company considerable sums of money to keep on the work site. After two particular bad situations with the program for the deaf and their counsellor, I probably will not undertake any further training situation. Several of our work experience students have not been honest, reliable or mature. This influences other staff in the area and tends to give all of this type of student [MMH] a bad image.

In the competitive low skill labour market placement of handicapped people has caused strife amongst my regular workforce because of their lack of effort or enthusiasm. None were able to complete training. Most of the people I have employed lose their enthusiasm for work as soon as the counsellor leaves. There is NO commitment to long term employment - it is just a job.

Hiring handicapped workers required much personal effort on my part to keep these people employed.

Issues

Streamline Jobs

Employers need to "streamline" jobs tailored for MMH individuals needs, therefore enabling more successes to individuals with "special needs".

Public Awareness

There needs to be a better public awareness of their abilities and a better commercial awareness of what they have to offer the workplace.

Government Subsidies

The productivity levels [of persons with MMH] are lower than average, therefore the business incurs higher costs. There should be some kind of subsidies that would last the entire time that the handicapped person is employed.

When productivity is below normal, government or other financial assistance may be necessary.

There should be a 100% subsidy in order to place person at first.

Government cheques take up to two months for reimbursement - this is a very negative factor. Government paperwork should be simplified.

There should be some financial aid for us [employers] until the person [with MMH] is productive in our environment.

The Need for Low-Skill Jobs

Filing jobs have given way to microfilm and micro-fiche.

Qualified high-skilled personnel are needed for computers and word processors - no more typewriters -technological impact.

Persons with MMH must work in companies large enough that their tasks will be few and unvarying.

These people [MMH] could compete best for positions that normally require repeated or constant supervision.

These people [MMH] do a satisfactory job on menial tasks requiring little supervision - jobs with lots of routine and repetition are easier and are done more satisfactorily.

The demand for routine jobs would be a high factor affecting the employability of persons with MMH for they seem to have a lack of technical training.

Only specific jobs are suitable for persons with MMH - that is, very routine, with strong supervision.

Human Element

People being able to take more time with others who are not as fortunate as they are - human side of the matter - sympathy.

I believe it is essential that we hire people with both mild physical and mental handicaps.

Support Services

My experiences with hiring persons with MMH were happy ones mainly because of the strong support they and I received from the AVC supervisors. That supervision, on a long term basis, would seem to me to be a very large key to the success of the program.

Employment agencies are necessary.

There should be a closer contact with liaison for longer period of time.

I appreciate the difficulty of placing these persons.

Placement counsellors are understandably more concerned with satisfying the needs of the person or persons with mild mental handicaps, however, they often overlook the general qualifications which a restaurant employer looks for in personal hygiene, or applicants which are unable to communicate effectively with other staff members or customers. This is a difficult position for myself, as an employer, to explain to this applicant why I can not

hire him or her. Such a position could have been avoided if the employers' needs were considered.

General

Communication with other staff and also acceptance is very difficult. They [MMH] need lots of personal attention and support.

In our agency setting, direct child care positions are contingent upon a training standard of two years Early Childhood Diploma or equivalent. This explains the limits we have encountered in terms of hiring persons with MMH. To date, we have only had one individual who volunteered with our agency, from the TVP. The experience was a positive one and would be open to involvement of a similar nature.

Most of the people we have had hopefully have went on to get a job and I know that at least 70% have. It takes time to oversee these people and help them to understand what a job is all about - but I don't mind if they can carry on and hopefully I have helped some.

Factors identified in the questionnaire are, for the most part, generic factors considered in the decision to hire any employee.

The fact that I have only dealt with one individual hampers my effectiveness on this survey. My individual could not hear well or speak and had cerebral palsy, so her situation was somewhat different from mild mental disorders.

Overall, our liaison with a follow-up counsellor has proven very beneficial to both us and the employee. Often the MMH employees merely require an alternate method of training such as a hands-on experience and supervision. However, once the training is complete, the outcome definitely justifies all of the time and effort.

I am impressed with the job performance and attitudes of our person [with MMH].

My area is a one person operation. The acceptable person with a mild mental handicap would have to be capable of working with little supervision on an independent basis. Work must be done quickly and independently because of deadlines.